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DEVELOPING A STRATEGY FOR EMERGING ADULTS TO TRANSITION INTO THE OVERALL COMMUNITY OF GRACE CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

Developing a Strategy for Emerging Adults to Transition Into the Overall Community of Grace Church

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The goal of this study was to explore the cultural changes that have contributed to the delay adolescents are facing in making the transition to adulthood and the role churches can play in easing that transition. It is argued that the Church is uniquely positioned to answer the three specific questions of identity, autonomy, and belonging that are required for the adolescent to individuate. This thesis was evaluated at Grace Church in Wichita Falls, Texas.

Through an examination of the development of social science's understanding of adolescence, a context is presented that seeks to explain the cultural shifts that have contributed to the elongation of adolescence. The unique characteristics of this life stage (18- to 25-year-olds), combined with the emerging adult's psychosocial development and the culture's environmental dynamics have left this group void of the necessary social capital to make the transition into adulthood in a healthy and efficient way.

However, the Church is strategically positioned to intervene in the lives of these emerging adults. With the community of the Church, the transition to adulthood can be more effectively supported through a convergence of believers with a congruent message. In order for this to happen, the Church must adopt an "And" mentality that balances both the centrifugal and centripetal call of the Church. This balance will allow the Church, with a proper philosophy of discipleship, to disciple emerging adults through the process of individuation, whereby they see the Scriptures most fully answer life's most pressing questions.

Grace Church has historically been a classroom church, but several programs were offered this past summer to build community. All of those offerings were well-received and would be defined as successful. This shift has Grace poised to become more effective in welcoming emerging adults into the life of the church.

Theological Mentor: Kurt Fredrickson, DMin

Words: 299

To Team Bourgeois: Ellen, Taylor, and Anna Katherine,
I thank God that I have the privilege of walking through life with you

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INTRODUCTION

The collective body of God's people is known as the *ekklesia* (Gk. ἐκκλησιά), a compound Greek word that is defined as "a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly."[1] That is the Church: a group of people who have been called out of their previous lives to live new lives, with a new calling of serving Christ. This diverse group has always been a cross-section of the population, disregarding the boundaries of culture, gender, and age.[2]

With that understanding, one would believe that the Church's membership would reflect every age group. However, even the most casual observer can view the changes in culture and see that the Church is losing her relevance and her ability to impact this generation and those that will follow.[3] Succinctly stated, "Religious involvement is simply not a priority among this generation of young adults."[4] There are several possible explanations for this phenomenon, such as the possibility that "rampant religious

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[1] Joseph H. Thayer, *The New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, corrected edition (Wheaton, IL: Evangel Publishing Company, 1974), s.v. ἐκκλησία.

[2] *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, s.v. ἐκκλησία.

[3] "Emerging adults" is a term that Jeffrey Jensen Arnett first proposed to describe a "new conception of development for the period from the late teens through the twenties, with a focus on ages 18 to 25." Arnett explains his choice of "emerging" by stating that he feels it really captures the dynamic, changeable, and fluid quality of this period of life. See Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties," *American Psychologist* 55, no. 5 (May 2000): 469.

[4] Jeremy E. Uecker, Mark D. Regnerus, and Margaret L. Vaaler, "Losing My Religion: The Social Sources of Religious Decline in Early Adulthood," *Social Forces* 85, no. 4 (2007): 1686.

privatization" devalues participation for young adults,[5] a general skepticism regarding religious institutions,[6] and the perceived loss of individualism that would accompany joining an institution and the attending set of beliefs.[7] Most likely, aspects of each of those possibilities are contributing to the overall problem, resulting in the Church not being forced to look at her own culpability in this current environment.

This time of life has become what many refer to as the volitional years due to the ratio of freedom to responsibility. Rindfuss has described these years as being "demographically dense" due to the frequent transitions of life in areas such as love, work, and the exploration of one's own worldviews.[8] Beyond the sheer number of decisions that these individuals are facing, they are also dealing with decisions of enormous significance. During these pivotal years, individuals are making life choices that will have, in Arnett's words, "enduring ramifications."[9] Decisions in areas such as schooling, career path, relationships, marriage, and parenthood will all set a trajectory for one's life.

The impact and weight of all these choices and transitions have not gone unnoticed by this age group. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the median age

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[5] Uecker, Regnerus and Vaaler, "Losing My Religion," 1686.

[6] Jeffrey Jensen Arnett and Lene Arnett Jensen, "A Congregation of One: Individualized Religious Beliefs among Emerging Adults," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 17, no. 5 (2002): 462.

[7] Ibid., 464-465.

[8] Ronald R. Rindfuss, "The Young Adult Years: Diversity, Structural Change, and Fertility," *Demography* 28, no. 4 (Nov 1991): 496.

[9] Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties," *American Psychologist* 55, no. 5 (2000): 469.

for marriage in 1970 was 20.8 for women and 23.2 for men, but had risen to 25.9 for women and 27.5 for men in 2006."[10] This new delay in marriage is only one aspect of the delay in achieving adulthood and is one reason for the creation of this new phase of emerging adulthood, which is synonymous with late adolescence. While adolescence has a definitive onset demonstrated by a physiological event, adolescence culminates with the completion of individuation. Individuation is the process in which a person is becoming a unique individual, moving from dependency to interdependency, and believing that he or she can separate and contribute.[11] More specifically, each individual must answer three questions during this process regarding one's identity ("Who am I?"), one's autonomy ("Do I matter and do my choices matter?"), and one's sense of belonging ("Where do I fit?").[12] It is not difficult to see how broad a path can be created by even a slight variance in one's answer to those three questions. A course for an entire life could be set, and unfortunately, it is during this time that emerging adults are pulling away from the Church.

Change is the very nature and essence of culture. Attempts to halt or even slow down that change are akin to standing on a shoreline and attempting to hold back the tide. One theologian addresses the challenges inherent in the changing values of a society in

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[10] U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Estimated Median Age at First Marriage, by Sex: 1890 to the Present," Families and Living Arrangements, Formerly Households and Families, http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam.html#history (accessed June 30, 2008).

[11] Chap Clark, "Hurt: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers," Seminar, The Oaks Camp and Conference Center, 27 February 2008.

[12] Ibid.

which "personality has more street value than character" and the pursuit of the ever-elusive "psychological wholeness" has more value than "spiritual authenticity."[13] The Church must address her part in the problem with the inconsistencies of her own behavior. Phillips and Bloesch write, "Faith is an awakening and empowering by the Spirit for commitment to Jesus Christ and service under the cross."[14] This is the true calling for the faith community. However, they ascertain that if this truth is not realized, "ritualism, dogmatism, authoritarianism, and other instances of formalism masquerade as faith."[15] This is where the problem arises. Culture may only see the "masquerade of faith" and then draw conclusion regarding the relevance of the Church. Individuals then can offer all of the "-isms" that they see the Church offering as a reason for a lack of involvement in Church. However, it does not have to be that way: the Church, empowered by the Spirit, has the opportunity to reach beyond the "-isms."

The important question remains: "How is the Church to move forward?" Due to the changing culture, the Church must reconsider her approach. Hannah writes, "Christians are in a world that has repudiated many of the assumptions of modernity: the importance of the rationale, the propriety of the orderly, and the possibility of the objective truth."[16] These doors used in connecting with culture fifty years ago are

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[13] John D. Hannah, *Our Legacy: The History of Christian Doctrine* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001), 339.

[14] Timothy R. Phillips and Donald G. Bloesch, "Counterfeit Spirituality," in *The Christian Educator's Handbook on Spiritual Formation*, ed. Kenneth O. Gangel and James C. Wilhoit (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 72.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Hannah, *Our Legacy,* 339.

irrelevant, so new doors of connection must be sought. There is no subculture in which that is more important than the adolescent and emerging adult world.

According to Rahn, "Youth ministry has distinguished itself from other ministries, in part, because we observe that young people have different developmental needs," and youth ministry has a "rich harvest of ministry applications" built on empirical insights into the way adolescents learn, grow, and mature.[17] The insights that will be explored are focused both on midadolescence and late adolescence. Arnett is seeking to re-label the late adolescent group as "emerging adults" because this term focuses on a time in life where the future is yet to be decided and the scope of independent exploration of life's possibilities is greater for most people than it will be at any other period of the life course.[18]

Before moving into the specifics of this research, an important trend pervading these important years must be addressed in order to lay a foundation for the general task of adolescence. Hersch levels an indictment against adults everywhere when she writes, "The most stunning change for adolescents today is their aloneness."[19] She continues with her critique that the "adolescents of the nineties are more isolated and more unsupervised than other generations."[20] This trend that Hersch describes has been labeled

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[17] Dave Rahn, "Restoring Adolescents: Essentials of Worldwide Ministry," in *Introduction to Christian Education and Formation: A Lifelong Plan for Christ-Centered Restoration*, ed. Ronald T. Habermas (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 161.

[18] Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood," 469.

[19] Patricia Hersch, *A Tribe Apart: A Journey into the Heart of American Adolescence*, 1st trade paperback ed. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999), 19.

[20] Ibid.

by Clark as "systemic abandonment." Hersch and Clark believe that adolescents have not walked away from the adult world, but have been forced into a position in which they must create their own secret and separate world.[21]

While adolescents may not be able to use the label "systemic abandonment," they most definitely feel it, as in the case of schooling. While most people would agree that schools were established to support and educate our children, a closer look at schools today exposes a different reality. A good example is Eve, who maintains a 3.97 grade point average and has participated in more than twenty-five school activities. She is clearly overextended and says that she hopes to one day "have a life" because school has turned her into nothing more than a "robot."[22] For Eve, school has not been a time for her to enjoy life, get an education, and build lasting relationships. She instead sees school as a trial she must endure now in hopes that one day she will wake up and be able to enjoy life. She is not the only one feeling this way, as Pope collects other testimonials that address the same issues. Pope offers this strange commentary, "Schools have found a way not to reward good behavior and in some ways *discourage* [emphasis added] it with so much emphasis placed on grades and individual achievement."[23] Are grades and individual achievements really the goal? If so, then the education system is a success

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[21] Chap Clark, *Hurt: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 44.

[22] Denise Clark Pope, *"Doing School" How We Are Creating a Generation of Stressed Out, Materialistic, and Miseducated Students* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 1, 30, 32, 154.

[23] Ibid., 139.

because "evidence of student success is everywhere."[24] However, this begs the question, "At what cost are we pursuing these goals?" Some students have said that these goals have done nothing more than "ignite feelings of intense competition" and provide "little support for intellectual engagement and passion."[25] Based on her research, Pope draws some conclusions in the form of a rhetorical question when she asks, "Are we fostering an environment that promotes intellectual curiosity, cooperation and integrity, or are our schools breeding anxiety, deception, and frustration?"[26] Bronfenbrenner goes a step further when he declares that over the last twenty years, schools have become "one of the most potent breeding grounds of alienation in American society."[27]

Despite the many hours adolescents spend in school on a weekly basis, systemic abandonment can most vividly be felt in the home. Elkind assigns blame to the parents when he writes, "Our abrogation of the responsibilities of adulthood is the single most powerful contributor to the new imbalance and to the stress that imbalance puts on children."[28] Many parents simply are not around for their children. This odd absence of parents and adults from the world of adolescents prevents a true picture of what is going on during these tumultuous years. This lack of clarity is not due to an adolescent's

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[24] Pope, "*Doing School"*, 3.

[25] Ibid., 155, 165.

[26] Ibid., 6.

[27] Urie Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 231.

[28] David Elkind, *Ties That Stress: The New Family Imbalance*, 1st Harvard University Press pbk. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 227.

"rebelling, or avoiding, or evading"; rather, it is due to the fact that adults are just unavailable.[29] As a result of this absence, parents are increasingly finding themselves at a loss regarding how to relate to their own children. Culture insists that adolescents are growing up and need more freedom, so there is an "increasing trend to treat teenagers as equals in our homes."[30] That trend, in conjunction with this postmodern generation, has yielded a "perception of adolescent sophistication" resulting in lessened support from adults to assist adolescents through the demanding transitions necessary to move into a secure adulthood.[31] While postmodernity would herald the advances made in leaving modernity behind, the postmodern world is running the risk of the loss of any social capital where there is a interdependent community and any shared view of the common good.[32] Social capital is a term used by sociologists to describe the "features of social life - networks, norms, and trust - that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue their shared objectives."[33] This loss of social capital, labeled "social decapitalization" by Putnam, is not something that happens suddenly, but is the result of years and years of neglect, avoidance, and apathy.[34] Putnam first cited evidence of these

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[29] Hersch, *A Tribe Apart*, 19.

[30] David Elkind, *All Grown Up and No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis*, Rev. ed. (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1998), 3.

[31] Elkind, *Ties That Stress*, 169.

[32] Ibid., 25.

[33] Robert D. Putnam, "Tuning in, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America," *PS: Political Science and Politics* (December 1995): 664-665.

[34] Robert D. Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," *Journal of Democracy* 6 (1995): 73.

loosening bonds within both the nuclear and extended families.[35] He followed up this study with another that sought to understand the depth of the loss of social capital. He found that people were now spending 25 percent less time in ordinary conversations with others, 50 percent less time in organizational or civic meetings, and that over the past twenty or twenty-five years, the number of people who report never spending a social evening with a neighbor has doubled.[36]

The playing field is set. Adolescents and emerging adults have a declining interest in Church. The Church needs to find some new "doors" for ministry to become more effective. The task of adolescence has never been easy, but the systemic abandonment of caring adults in the lives of these adolescents has made the journey even more difficult. It is time for the Church to recommit Herself as the Bride of Christ to caring for this age group as they seek to answer questions that will set a course for the rest of their lives.

The purpose of this final project is to examine factors that have contributed to the creation of emerging adulthood as a life stage in order for Grace Church in Wichita Falls, Texas, to practically assist this age group in making a successful transition into the interdependent adult community of the church. Armed with a deeper understanding in the areas of psychosocial development, the current culture, and emerging adults, a grid will be constructed for a thicker theological understanding that pertains to this age group.

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[35] Putnam, "Bowling Alone," 73.

[36] Robert D. Putnam, "The Decline of Civil Society: How Come? So What?" *Journal of Public Sector Management* 27 (1996): 31.

With that established, a biblical understanding of the process of discipleship will be examined with a focus on how the Church is strategically positioned to walk with emerging adults through the process of transitioning into adulthood and into the overall life of the Grace Church.

As the College and Young Adults Pastor at Grace Church, I am committed to moving our church forward in being more effective in caring for this age group. In order for that to become a reality, this project will conclude with an evaluation of the current ministry using a template for theological discernment that will be followed by offering a plan to address the deficiencies of the current ministry.

PART ONE

BUILDING A CONTEXT

CHAPTER 1

EXAMINING PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

In order to better understand psychosocial development in emerging adults, one must first look at the historical findings of scientists who have invested their lives in this study. Volumes have been written on this subject, so a comprehensive look into each contributor is beyond the scope of this project. Several researchers and the contribution each has made to our current understanding will be addressed here. After this brief survey, a composite picture of all those insights will be built to create a framework of understanding that will function as a guide through the rest of this project.

Past and Present Approaches to Psychosocial Development

There is a long history of thought on the subject of adolescence that can be traced back to the early Greeks and carried through the Middle Ages into the twentieth century.[1] The first researcher in the field of adolescence to be considered is G. Stanley Hall, a man who has been described by historians to be the father of the scientific study of

[1] John W. Santrock, *Adolescence*, 11th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2007), 5.

adolescence.[2] In 1904, Hall published his large, two-volume set titled *Adolescence*. Hall viewed adolescence as a time of great storm and stress that was characterized by turbulent times of conflict and mood swings that lasted into one's early twenties.[3] Hall was greatly influenced by Charles Darwin, believing that things were genetically predetermined and that this developmental period was suggestive of some ancient period of storm and stress.[4] Margaret Mead, having lived among Samoan adolescents, dismissed much of Hall's storm-and-stress model in her 1928 text by stating that adolescence was a product of culture because she did not see these stormy and stressful tendencies in the more relaxed culture of Samoa.[5] In Hall's research, he recognized the importance of the developmental process of the adolescent pulling away from his or her family of origin by chiding parents who thought of their adolescents as just "mere children." He recognized that this kind of thinking led parents to tighten the reins on adolescents during a developmental period when the reins really should be loosened.[6] Part of his reasoning for this conclusion was the adolescent response to the parental tightening of the reins. Hall explains that the wisdom and advice of parents and teachers is often overtopped by other factors for the adolescent. In particularly rude situations,

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[2] Santrock, *Adolescence*, 6.

[3] G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*, 2 Volumes. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904), 1:xv, xix.

[4] Ibid., 1:xiii.

[5] Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilization* (New York: W. Morrow & Co., 1928).

[6] Hall, *Adolescence*, 2:384.

this advice may be met with a blank contradiction.[7] He makes allowances for adolescent mischief, at least among males, when he states that this time of "semicriminality" is normal for all healthy boys.[8] Overall, Hall was a proponent of the adolescent, declaring this time to be the very best decade of life and the birthday of imagination.[9] Whether one agrees with Hall's work or not, his major contribution is bringing the study of adolescence to the forefront and making it a scientific field of study.

Jean Piaget was another giant in the field of studying childhood and adolescence. Like Hall, Piaget believed development followed a natural, non-changing pattern. For Piaget, that pattern moved from sensory motor reflexes to perception, from perception to concrete thinking, and from concrete thinking to propositional thinking.[10] As he saw it, this pattern followed a constant order of succession, in which each stage has a structure that explains the coordinating behaviors. He believed that these stages were integrative and are not interchangeable.[11]

Erik Erikson saw cognitive development much differently than did Piaget. Whereas Piaget understood development to be biological, Erikson saw a sociological path for development. Erikson describes eight stages of human psychological development, each marked by a developmental crisis that had to be resolved before the individual could

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[7] Hall, *Adolescence*, 2:384, 2:79.

[8] Ibid., 1:414.

[9] Ibid., 1:viii, 313.

[10] Jean Piaget and Barbel Inhelder, *The Psychology of the Child* (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

[11] Ibid., 153.

graduate to the next stage.[12] In Erikson's understanding, the term "crisis" is used "in a developmental sense to connote not a threat of catastrophe, but a turning point, a crucial period of increased vulnerability and heightened potential, and therefore, the ontogenic source of generation strength and maladjustment."[13]

The next two contributors in the field of adolescent development to be considered were both greatly shaped by their circumstances, directing each of them into specific fields of study. Lawrence Kohlberg pursued a path of studying moral development after his interest in justice and morality was ignited by the atrocities committed during the Holocaust.[14] From that point, he had a desire to develop a philosophy that addressed a moral education. As a follower of Piaget, he developed his own sequential, non-changing pattern of moral development that culminated in an ethic of justice and morality.[15] Kohlberg's work led to the research of Carol Gilligan. Gilligan, who taught alongside Kohlberg at Harvard, realized that "the theories of psychological development I had learned and was teaching—the theories of Freud and Erikson, Piaget and Kohlberg—were all based on the assumption that man was the measure of all things human."[16] With this realization, Gilligan began asking the question, "What had been lost by leaving

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[12] Erik H. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1994), 51-107.

[13] Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1968), 96.

[14] Lawrence Kohlberg, *The Philosophy of Moral Development: Moral Stages and the Idea of Justice*, 1st ed., Essays on Moral Development (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 407.

[15] Brenda Munsey, *Moral Development, Moral Education, and Kohlberg: Basic Issues in Philosophy, Psychology, Religion, and Education* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1980), 62-66.

[16] Carol Gilligan, "Recovering Psyche: Reflections on Life-History and History," *The Annual of Psychoanalysis* 32, no. (2004): 132.

women out of the research?"[17] As she asked the questions, she began to find answers demonstrating that theories regarding autonomy were more consistent with males.[18] Gilligan found that "women tended to reason about moral dilemmas in distinctly different ways than men, preferring to consider the web of interpersonal relationships rather than hierarchies and rules."[19] Both Kohlberg and Gilligan made significant contributions in the fields of cognitive development, but their models are not without flaws.

In Kohlberg's book, *The Meaning and Measurement of Moral Development*, Kohlberg describes three levels of development that begin at six years of age.[20] The first level that he describes is the "preconventional reasoning" stage (corresponding to childhood) in which rewards and punishments are used as external controls. From there the individual moves on to the "conventional" stage (corresponding to adolescence) that emphasizes social standards in which relational components are added to the reward and punishment system. The final stage is the "post-conventional" (corresponding to adulthood) in which personal standards are reflected and universal ethical standards are achieved. Within this closed model, at least two issues seem to arise for which Kohlberg makes no allowance. The idea of a universal ethic sounds appealing, but one has never been developed, and given the variety of cultures around the world, it does not seem

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[17] Gilligan, "Recovering Psyche," 132.

[18] Joel R. Sneed et al., "Gender Differences in the Age-Changing Relationship between Instrumentality and Family Contact in Emerging Adulthood," *Developmental Psychology* 42, no. 5 (2006): 788.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Lawrence Kohlberg, *The Meaning and Measurement of Moral Development* (Worcester, MA: Clark University Press, 1981).

likely that there ever will be one. Secondly, this model denies the impact of human sin in the lives of people.[21] There are no certainties for growth and development in all individuals, yet Kohlberg does not leave room for that possibility.

In his book, *Stages of Faith*, James Fowler, building most notably on the works of Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg, suggests that faith is developed over six stages.[22] For Fowler, faith is not always religious in content or context, rather it is a "person's or group's way of moving into the force field of life" in which the individual can find "coherence in and give meaning to the multiple forces and relations that make up our lives."[23] The third and fourth stages to be considered in studying adolescence are labeled "synthetic-conventional faith" and "individuated-reflective faith." The synthetic-conventional faith stage is during early adolescence, as the individual's experience is extending beyond the family and must synthesize other values and information to prove the basis for an identity and an outlook.[24] Because the basis for one's identity is an on-going process, this stage is a "conformist" stage in which the individual is highly influenced by peers. According to Fowler, the individuated-reflective faith will most often occur somewhere in the individual's thirties or forties, if ever, when they seek to

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[21] Chap Clark, "Youth, Family, and Culture Cohort 2009 (Y2)," unpublished class notes for YF723/724, Fuller Theological Seminary, March 2009.

[22] James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper One, 1995), 122-213.

[23] Ibid., 4.

[24] Ibid., 172.

eradicate the inconsistencies in the previous stage.[25] However, Fowler saw the transition from stage three to four as critical for the late adolescent or emerging adult to "take seriously the burden of responsibility for his or her own commitments, lifestyle, beliefs and attitudes."[26] While this transition is difficult, the benefit is the ability of the individual to critically reflect on one's identity and one's ideology.[27]

Santrock addresses an important concept in regard to the timing and duration of adolescence when he states, "Adolescence begins in biology and ends in culture."[28] The onset of adolescence is definitive as it is grounded in pubertal maturation. However, the ending is much more vague, as it is determined by cultural standards and experiences. His major contribution to the field of cognitive development was impressing the importance of the adolescent's identity and the process used to understand that identity. He writes, "Identity formation neither happens neatly nor is cataclysmic"; rather, "Identity development is done in bits and pieces."[29] On this basis, the quest for identity development has to make allowances for trial and error, victories and defeat, and small (sometimes unnoticeable) growth over time. A victory today for the adolescent may not equate to a victory tomorrow. With this understanding, the adolescent is freed up with

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[25] Fowler, *Stages of Faith,* 181.

[26] Ibid., 182.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Santrock, *Adolescence*, 19.

[29] Ibid., 153.

the idea that life is not dependent on the next decision. After all, in the quest for identity development, "Decisions are not once and for all but must be made again and again."[30]

In his book, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*, Urie Bronfenbrenner focuses on the impact of the ecological environment in the process of cognitive development. He likens this concept to a set of Russian dolls where the structures are nested one inside the other.[31] These nested structures consist of the immediate environment (microsystem), the interconnections of the various microsystems (mesosystem), the societal institutions (exosystem), and the broad system of cultural beliefs and values (macrosystem).[32] In this model, all of those structures are exerting influence on the individual requiring a "mutual accommodation" in which the interaction between the environment and the person is bidirectional.[33] While other research had shown the impact of the environment on the individual, Bronfrenbrenner's major contribution is his demonstration of reciprocity between the individual and the environment in such a way that the individual also had impact on his or her environment.

Bowlby and Ainsworth both researched the importance of attachment theories. While they did not initially begin working together, they found that their compatible

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[30] Santrock, *Adolescence*, 153.

[31] Urie Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 3.

[32] Ibid., 16-42.

[33] Ibid., 22.

approaches eventually merged them into a partnership.[34] Bowlby emphasizes the active nature of attachment behavior as opposed to what he saw to be the passive conception of dependence. He views attachment behavior as a vital component of human behavior, on par with eating, that continues throughout life.[35] In Ainsworth's study, she found evidence of an infant's use of his or her mother as the secure base from which to explore the world and then return to as a safe haven.[36] Furthermore, Ainsworth found that when a child was securely attached to his or her mother, the child could be quickly comforted by being picked up, and then respond positively to being put down to resume exploration.[37] The more they studied attachment theory, the more they saw its importance even beyond childhood.

Most of the research discussed thus far has dealt with the cognitive development of children and adolescents. Given the topic of this paper, it is important to consider what research is discovering regarding the cognitive development of emerging adults. Labouvie-Vief has found that "emerging structures of adult thought appear and show rapid growth in emerging adulthood using abstract levels of complexity and go beyond high-level thinking."[38] In a related study, Labouvie-Vief found that this level of complex

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[34] Mary S. Ainsworth and John Bowlby, "An Ethological Approach to Personality Development," *American Psychologist* 46, no. 4 (1991): 333.

[35] Ibid., 336.

[36] Ibid., 337.

[37] Ibid., 338.

[38] Gisela Labouvie-Vief, "Emerging Structures of Adult Thought," in *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*, ed. Jeffrey J. Arnett and Jennifer L. Tanner (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006), 80.

thought tends to exhibit itself through emphasizing pragmatism in decision-making.[39] This allows the emerging adult to merge subjective data from multiple sources to make decisions and move forward. This intersubjectivity of thought accomplishes two things: (1) movement "beyond institutional boundaries towards constructive change" and (2) "formation of identity, establishment of personal and institutional bonds, and the extent and style of participation in educational, economic, political, and religious life."[40] Labouvie-Vief points out that just because the capacity for this thought is possible, there are no guarantees this potential will come to fruition. She writes, "Emerging adulthood can be seen as a period critical for the establishment of mature structures of thinking, yet also be vulnerable to stabilizing distortive forms of thinking if important familial and cultural supports are not available."[41]

One last area that bears discussion here is the work of Margaret Mahler and Peter Blos on separation-individuation. This topic has been placed here intentionally so that it can be covered in conjunction with the work of Jennifer Tanner in relation to emerging adults. More focus will be placed on Blos and Tanner since their work has more direct impact on this particular project.

Mahler differentiates a physical birth from a psychological birth of an individual in which the first is an observable, dramatic act and the later is a intrapsychic process that

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[39] Gisela Labouvie-Vief and Manfred Diehl, "Cognitive Complexity and Cognitive-Affective Integration: Related or Separate Domains of Adult Development?" *Psychology and Aging* 15, no. 3 (2000): 502.

[40] Labouvie-Vief, "Emerging Structures of Adult Thought," 80.

[41] Ibid.

happens over time.[42] She labels this the "separation-individuation" process as it is the "establishment of a sense of separateness from, and relation to, a world of reality, particularly with regard to the experiences of one's own body and to the principal representative of the world as the infant experiences it, the primary love object."[43] Mahler chose this label because she saw this process as comprised of two complementary developments where the separation occurs with "the child's emergence from a symbiotic fusion with the mother" and the individuation consists of "those achievements marking the child's assumption of his own individual characteristics."[44] Based on her observations, she saw this process in the infant's life beginning in the fourth or fifth month of life and continuing until the thirtieth or thirty-sixth month.[45] The result of this important process is the attainment of both self and object constancy.

Building on the foundational work of Mahler, Peter Blos views adolescence as another process of separation-individuation, leading him to label adolescence as the "second separation-individuation." His view is that the totality of adolescence was the second separation-individuation process due to the psychological changes where an adolescent will "draw content, stimulation, aim, and direction from a complex interplay

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[42] Margaret S. Mahler, Fred Pine, and Anni Bergman, "Stages in the Infant's Separation from the Mother," in *The Psychosocial Interior of the Family*, ed. Gerald Handel and Gail G. Whitchurch (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1994), 419.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid., 420.

[45] Ibid., 419.

of inner and outer impingements."[46] He saw that both separation-individuation processes have a heightened vulnerability of personality organization, an urgency for changes in psychic structure, and the ability to experience specific deviant development should they falter during this time.[47]

However, Blos does see differences between the first and the second process. Unlike the predictability of the first separation-individuation, the second separation-individuation is more relative in that it depends on "drive maturation and on acquired durability of the ego structure."[48] For Blos, the ego changes are the accompaniment and consequence of adolescent disengagement from infantile objects.[49] This disengagement that leads to ego development is not a given; as the phrase "acquired" implies, it is learned over time. Blos calls attention to the warning signs that may indicate the adolescent's struggle to disengage when he writes, "Ego disturbances, apparent in acting out, learning disorders, lack of purpose, procrastination, moodiness and negativism are frequently symptomatic signs of crisis or failure . . . representing derailment of [the] individuation process."[50]

Another distinction that Blos made between the two processes is the difference of the internal versus the external. The first process requires the infant to disengage from

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[46] Peter Blos, *The Adolescent Passage: Developmental Issues* (New York: International Universities Press, 1979), 141-142.

[47] Ibid., 142.

[48] Ibid., 148.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., 146.

external objects, while the second process requires the adolescent to disengage from the internalized objects of early childhood by shedding family dependencies to become a member of society at large.[51] As in the case of ego development, this task is a process and can be very emotional. As the adolescent begins to shed family dependencies, Blos said the adolescent will have periods of "proverbial and transient self-centeredness and self-aggrandizement" as well as mood swings.[52] Some of the emotions that accompany this stage are displaced. For example, as the adolescent struggles to disengage from these familial objects, the internal conflict will be expressed between the adolescent and his or her environment.[53] This process is filled with victories and defeat and, therefore, requires an observer to step back and look at the bigger picture. Blos cautioned against quick judgment in stating that "regressive and progressive movements alternate in shorter or longer intervals" that may give the casual observer a "lopsided impression of maturation."[54] Blos wisely recognized that an accurate accounting of an adolescent's maturity requires consistent observation over time. No individual is as bad as his or her worst day, but neither is that individual as good as his or her best day.

With the lengthening of adolescence, researchers are trying to understand the best label to apply to the age group of 18- to 25-year-olds. If late adolescence is preferred, does the shift from midadolescence to late adolescence require a "third separation-

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[51] Blos, *The Adolescent Passage,* 142, 412.

[52] Ibid., 412-413.

[53] Ibid., 413.

[54] Ibid., 143.

individuation?" If emerging adult is the preferred term, does this added life-stage address any developmental concerns? At this point in time, it appears that the majority view prefers the label "late adolescent" on the basis of psychosocial development, but the "emerging adult" proponents appear to make a cultural argument for their label. Jennifer Tanner, a proponent of the emerging adult label, argues against seeing this time as a third separation-individuation. Instead, she introduces a new term, "recentering," to describe this developmental stage in the lives of 18- to 25-year-olds.

Tanner defines "recentering" as a relational process that takes into account all of one's past and future personal support systems.[55] The distinction that Tanner makes between the separation-individuation process and the recentering process is the level on which each process occurs.[56] As Tanner sees it, the separation-individuation process occurs on the level of differentiation from the family, whereas the recentering process occurs on a systems-level with a variable "that describes the extent to which the emerging adult is embedded within the family of origin and how established the new system commitments are."[57] In other words, this phase of development for the emerging adult is not about separating from a previous structure as much as it is about negotiating the past, present, and future systems in the individual's life. Tanner sees great value in the second separation-individuation, citing that one's ability to successfully complete the process

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[55] Jennifer L. Tanner, "Recentering During Emerging Adulthood: A Critical Turning Point in Life Span Human Development," in *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*, ed. Jeffrey J. Arnett and Jennifer L. Tanner (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006), 34.

[56] Ibid., 34.

[57] Ibid.

serves as a predictor for the emerging adult to move into intimate relationships and marriage.[58] Recognizing the difficulty the adolescent endures transitioning through the second separation-individuation, Tanner addresses the value of supportive parents in the process. Tanner credits parents who support their adolescent through the separation-individuation phase as making a difference in their child's ability to recenter and gain adult sufficiency.[59] Fraser and Tucker found the same pattern to be true in their research, and writes that "Parents who allow their children to achieve optimal levels of individuation also promote a strong sense of responsibility, self-confidence, and optimism in their children that leads to their adeptness at problem-solving."[60] While separation-individuation is difficult for both the adolescent and the parents, Fraser and Tucker's study showed that emerging adults who have the competence to face the world often have an ally in their parents to help prepare them and continue to stand by them. Tanner's recentering philosophy calls on parents to remain supportive during these emerging adult years, as this allows the individual to accrue experience in life and prepare for self-governance with variable amounts of support.[61] This type of parental support is not needed on a daily basis, but knowing that it is there allows the emerging adult to attempt positive steps towards personal growth when the risks are minimized. However, there are

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[58] Tanner, "Recentering During Emerging Adulthood," 35.

[59] Ibid.

[60] K. P. Fraser and C. M. Tucker, "Individuation, Stress, and Problem-Solving Abilities of College Students," *Journal of College Student Development* 38 (1997): 466.

[61] Tanner, "Recentering During Emerging Adulthood," 49.

some paths that the emerging adult has to walk alone. Tanner explains, "While progress towards the developmental tasks of childhood and adolescence (such as moral development and educational progress) is scaffolded by institutions (such as family and school), emerging adults are challenged to scaffold their own progress from adolescence to adulthood."[62]

Using Blos' concept on the importance of ego development, Tanner draws two conclusions in regards to the emerging adult.[63] First, she finds that agency, active mastery, self-regulation, and impulse control are important predictors of adult sufficiency. Second, she believes that emerging adults with a higher level of ego development are more comfortable with the task of learning to stand alone. She ascribes so much value to having a higher level of ego development that she declares it to be *the* [emphasis added] difference-maker between thriving and floundering in this phase.

The Composite Picture of a Treacherous Journey

After a brief survey of both the historical and current approaches in understanding the psychosocial development in children, adolescents, and emerging adults, a composite model unifying the individual contributions can be developed. For the purposes of this project, this new model will be improved by integrating it with a theological understanding. The quest for an adolescent is individuation which, as Santrock identified, is set by cultural variables.

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[62] Tanner, "Recentering During Emerging Adulthood," 37.

[63] Ibid.

One difficulty that is encountered during this process is the sheer volume of options presented to the adolescent. Because of this, the quest can even seem quite elusive at times. An others-centered approach to making it through life is diametrically opposed to the process of individuation and, yet, on the surface the mere appearance of individuation yields the same fruit. Calvin notes that humans are prone to hypocrisy to the level that the "empty image of righteousness" is as abundantly satisfying at righteousness itself.[64] Erikson also comments on the struggle when he writes, "A child has quite a number of opportunities to identify himself, more or less experimentally, with real or fictitious people of either sex, with habits, traits, occupations, and ideas."[65] Due to these variables and so many more, Clark identifies individuation as an internal process that is both fluid and complex.[66]

Another problem in this process of individuation is the expanding length of time it takes to achieve the culturally determined target. The concept of adolescence has changed considerably over the last one hundred years. Arnett notes that adolescence developed between 1890-1920 as the period of life when young people were largely excluded from adult work and began to spend their time mostly with peers.[67] The

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[64] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: In Two Volumes*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans., Ford Lewis Battles, 2 Volumes, The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 1:37-38.

[65] Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle*, 25.

[66] Chap Clark, "The Changing Face of Adolescence: A Theological View of Human Development," in *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically About Youth Ministry*, ed. Kenda Creasy Dean, Chap Clark, and Dave Rahn (Grand Rapids, MI: Youth Specialties/Zondervan Publishing House, 2001), 51.

[67] Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: A Cultural Approach*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 30.

duration of adolescence has expanded dramatically since its inception. The data clearly shows that the onset of puberty (measured by the average age for females) is coming earlier in life.[68] Prior to the 1900s, the average age of puberty was in excess of fourteen years old. However, in 1980 the age had dropped to thirteen and further to twelve years of age in 2007. Those numbers marking the onset of puberty are discernible and objective.[69] However, the end of adolescence is considerably more vague because it is culturally determined. During the same time period in which adolescence is starting earlier, the age at which an individual completes adolescence is getting later. Prior to the 1900s, culture considered adolescence as ending around age 16, resulting in a process of less than two years. However, in 1980 culture extended the end of adolescence to 18 years of age (yielding a five-year process), and then extended it again in 2007 to the mid-twenties (yielding about a thirteen-year process). This data makes it easy to understand why the average age of marriage has been delayed for both men and women.

Any model that seeks to unify the best of all the psychosocial development research will have to address a number of elements. Most importantly, the elongation of adolescence has created a third stage, resulting in early, middle, and late adolescence (which corresponds to emerging adults). Mahler's and Blos's first and second separation-individuation processes will have to be considered. Ainsworth's and Bowlby's work on attachment theory will also be a factor. Piaget's work on cognitive development,

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[68] Chap Clark and Dee Clark, *Disconnected: Parenting Teens in a Myspace World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 63.

[69] Clark, "The Changing Face of Adolescence," 51.

demonstrating the capacity to move from concrete to abstract thought at thirteen to fourteen years of age should also be considered. Erikson's and Santrock's work on identity and the importance of that quest is another vital component for this composite picture.

Addressing all of those concepts together, Clark offers the illustration of a tightrope (see Figure 1).[70] Each of the poles supporting the tight rope represent a stable time in the individual's life, with the left pole being the child's home environment and the right pole being the individuated adult. Between those two poles, the tightrope exists in three parts: the early, middle, and late adolescent phases. This tightrope has one cognitive developmental marker: the transition to midadolescence, in which the adolescent is able to move into abstract thinking. The tightrope itself represents the dangerous journey of adolescence, which must be walked alone, in striving for individuation. However, as Clark points out, this "adolescent individuation involves separating from the role of child, not separating from the love, support, and nurture of the family system."[71] In Paul's first letter to the church at Thessalonica, he addresses the importance of maternal and paternal attachment. Paul sees that these components are not linked to gender but to function, in which the mothering is gentle and cherishing and the fathering is exhorting and comforting (1 Thes 2:7, 11).

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[70] Clark and Clark, *Disconnected*, 119-125.

[71] Clark, "The Changing Face of Adolescence," 53.

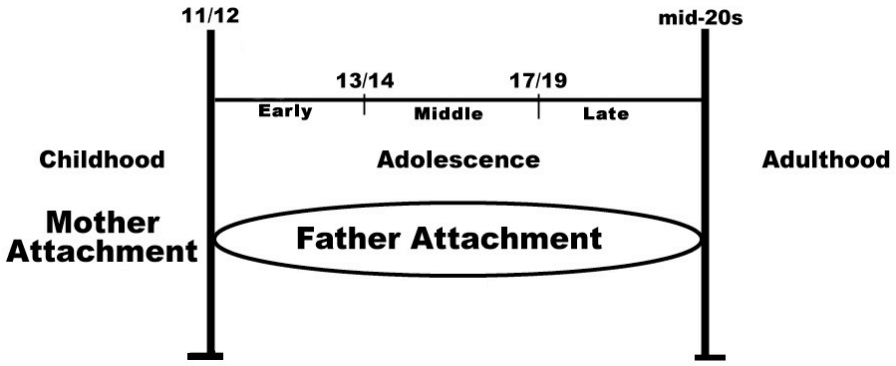

Figure 1. The Tightrope of Adolescence

Individuation and Emerging Adults

As discussed, the task of moving through adolescence is a difficult one that causes stress on the individual. Whether the term "late adolescent" or "emerging adult" is preferred, the same daunting obstacles have to be addressed. This person must learn how to live, and hopefully thrive, after high school and address the changing nature of the relationship in the individual's family of origin. Arnett first proposed the term "emerging adult" in May 2000 to describe a "new conception of development for the period from the late teens through the twenties, with a focus on ages 18 to 25."[72] He chose this label because "emerging" really seems to capture the dynamic, changeable, and fluid quality of this period of life.[73] He attempts to capture the modern lifestyle of the emerging adult by asking a series of rhetorical question for consideration: "Who would have predicted, in

[72] Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties," *American Psychologist* 55, no. 5 (2000): 469.

[73] Ibid., 477.

1900, that the young people of 2000 would typically remain in school through their late teens and often into their early 20s; or that they would typically postpone marriage into their late 20s or early 30s; or that they would spend a considerable amount of their leisure time listening to recorded music, watching images flicker on television or surfing the internet?"[74]

It is indeed a different time with different joys and struggles. This group will face their own mortality earlier than previous generations with the increasing threat of violence combined with automobile fatalities, homicide, and suicide that will likely touch them or someone close to them.[75] In addition, the prospect of an uncertain financial future looms for them. According to Cote, "The economic disfranchisement of youth can be seen in the fact that over the past thirty years there has been a steady and significant redistribution of wealth in North America based on age."[76] Overall, earning potential for males is down about 25 percent, while African-American youth are being hit the hardest with almost a 50 percent decrease.[77] Beyond those struggles, the perception others have of this generation has a generally negative tone. Mogelonsky speculates that they "may never grow up according to conventional standards."[78] In the twenty-first century, this

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[74] Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood*, 455.

[75] Mary M. Kent and Mark Mather, "What Drives U.S. Population Growth," *Population Bulletin* 57, no. 4 (December 2002): 13, 15.

[76] James E. Cote, *Arrested Adulthood: The Changing Nature of Maturity and Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 174.

[77] Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood*, 174.

[78] Marcia Mogelonsky, "The Rocky Road to Adulthood," *American Demographics* 18, no. 5 (1996): 32.

generation will have to tackle the principal issues of education, unemployment, immigration, and at-risk behaviors.[79]

According to Arnett, this age group has five distinguishing characteristics that separate it from all other life stages.[80] First, it is a time of identity explorations. The possibilities are wide open regarding living situation, relationships, and career. Second, it is a time of instability that is filled with opportunities. There are very few permanent decisions this group makes that cannot be altered. Third, this is a self-focused time, as the individual seeks a balance between reliance and commitments and the personal pursuit of identity. Fourth, this is a time of feeling "in-between," as they do not want to be considered adolescents, but they really do not yet consider themselves to be adults. Nelson and Barry conducted a poll asking 18- to 25-year-olds if they had reached adulthood with the following findings: 25 percent indicated that they had, 6 percent indicated that they had not, and 69 percent indicated that they had reached adulthood in some respects.[81] Fifth, this is a time of possibilities. Rindfuss has described these years as being "demographically dense" due to the frequent transitions of life in areas such as love, work, and the exploration of one's own worldview.[82] When Grob studied emerging adults, he observed that this time represented a "life span during which individuals

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[79] Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood*, 461.

[80] Ibid., 13.

[81] Larry J. Nelson and Carolyn McNamara Barry, "Distinguishing Features of Emerging Adulthood," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 20, no. 2 (2005): 253.

[82] Ronald R. Rindfuss, "The Young Adult Years: Diversity, Structural Change, and Fertility," *Demography* 28, no. 4 (Nov 1991): 496.

perceive the most control over the events in their lives," including many life-marker events.[83]

As this group enters the final stage of the tightrope, their excitement and optimism is apparent. The fact remains, however, that the process of individuation is a difficult one. Tanner seems to echo Ainsworth and Bowlby when she writes that the centrality of the parent-child relationship is the "most proximal and instrumental shaping force on individual development."[84] Yet, Cote points out that this age group is expected to "carve out major aspects of their adulthoods by means of a self-directed maturation process" because, as Hersch has already noted, the parents simply are not there.[85] This path of "self-directed maturation" is more vague than it has been previously because the traditional social markers that existed to identify the transition to adulthood have declined both in importance and clarity.[86] Another source of internal conflict that the emerging adult will face is delayed gratification. The individuation process is not fast, and in a world that is always seeking faster things (i.e. networks, internet, microwave, etc.), the call to be patient is a bit quiet. Cote calls attention to this struggle when he writes that the personal rewards for developmental individuation accrue much more slowly for the person and society than when the goal is nothing more than a mass display of

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[83] Alexander Grob, Franciska Krings, and Adrian Bangerter, "Life Markers in Biographical Narratives of People from Three Cohorts: A Life Span Perspective in Its Historical Context," *Human Development* 44, no. 4 (2001): 188.

[84] Tanner, "Recentering During Emerging Adulthood," 27.

[85] Cote, *Arrested Adulthood*, 31.

[86] Ibid.

individuality.[87] He explains that the "mistaking of individuality (an impression management derived from mass culture) for developmental individualization (genuine intellectual and emotional growth) seem to be the crux of the problem many people face today in making a transition from youth to adulthood."[88] Cote realizes, that the desire to move through the process of individuation quickly is always there. However, when the emerging adult gives into that temptation, he or she pays a heavy price as it stunts his or her developmental process and results in nothing more than managing an external appearance created by a changing culture.

This last phase of adolescence is exciting but also surrounded by dangers. The question remains: "What needs to happen to finish the treacherous journey across the tightrope into adulthood?" It should come as no surprise that there is great variance in how social science answers that question. For Erikson, adolescence is an identity crisis, so the single most crucial task is identity formation.[89] For Mussen, there are five tasks that have to be completed to move onto adulthood. His list was comprised of identity formation, biological adjustments, connection to peers, independence from family, and the establishment of values and standards that lead to order and consistent actions.[90]

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[87] Cote, *Arrested Adulthood*, 35.

[88] Ibid., 34.

[89] Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 29.

[90] Paul Henry Mussen and John Janeway Conger, *Child Development and Personality*, 5th ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 477-481.

Havighurst has a list of nine tasks that were necessary to complete adolescence.[91] However, much of his list consists of the structural markers (i.e. completing one's education, selecting a mate, etc.) that are no longer accepted. Arnett's list is much shorter: learning to take responsibility for self, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent.[92] For Tanner, the central task is recentering. She sees the process as the "critical and dynamic shift between an individual and society that takes place across emerging adulthood during which other-regulated behavior is replaced by self-regulated behavior toward the goal of adult sufficiency." [93] In this process that links separation-individuation and ego development, she sees a dual effect in that emerging adults move toward a lifelong commitment that will characterize adulthood, and establish more definite boundaries between self and the family of origin.[94]

With no definitive list to dictate the process of individuation, this project will utilize Clark's list of three tasks, as it seems to incorporate the vast majority of the elements of the other lists.[95] According to Clark, the adolescent must be able to answer three questions in the process of becoming a unique individual. The first task is answering the question of "Who am I?" This answer yields one's identity. The second

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[91] Robert James Havighurst, *Human Development and Education*, 1st ed. (New York: Longmans, Green, 1953), 2.

[92] Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2004), 209.

[93] Tanner, "Recentering During Emerging Adulthood," 22.

[94] Ibid., 22, 30.

[95] Clark, "The Changing Face of Adolescence," 55.

task is answering the question of "Do I matter?" and "Do my choices matter?" This answer yields one's autonomy. The third task is answering the question, "Where do I fit?" This answer yields one's sense of belonging.

Once the adolescent has successfully answered these three questions, he or she has crossed the tightrope and transitioned into adulthood. The next chapter will examine specific factors that affect the emerging adult's ability to answer those three questions. That will be followed by processing some psychosocial and environmental issues that are affecting the quest to answer those questions.

CHAPTER 2

EXAMINING THE CULTURE OF EMERGING ADULTS

Having drawn some conclusions regarding the cumulative work in understanding psychosocial development, those conclusions will now be applied specifically to emerging adults attempting to individuate. How some specific dynamics are affecting that development and their human relationships will also be addressed. This chapter will begin by examining how emerging adults are attempting to answer the three questions of identity, autonomy, and belonging that were introduced in the previous chapter. With those questions addressed, the focus will shift to the cultural and environmental realm, where issues of influences, messages, ecology, narratives and metanarratives, and cultural distinctives will be examined. Both the psychosocial and the cultural and environmental realms have virtually an unlimited number of issues that could be addressed. Rather than attempting to make an exhaustive list of all possible issues, several key issues have been chosen for each realm and will be discussed.

Identity: "Who Am I?"

Erikson writes that in the "social jungle of human existence, there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity."[1] If Erikson's premise is true, then it is easy to see why adolescents are stressed to the level that Pope addresses in *Doing School*, as in Eve's story. Elkind believes that parents have contributed greatly to this stress as they keep their young children moving constantly. He writes, "Young children have limited powers of adaptation, which are sometimes exceeded by the pressures of adult scheduling."[2] The problem does not end in childhood, but continues into adolescence. Elkind explains the consequences of this trend when he writes, "Whether we are hurrying children from babysitter to nursery school, or to do well on tests, or to deal with issues such as adult problems of sexuality, we are putting children under stress. While no one of these demands may overstress a child, the more hurrying demands are made on a child, the more likely it will be that the child will be overstressed."[3]

In this "overstressed" environment, adolescents must tackle the issue of what Erikson calls the "identity crisis," in which the adolescent must learn to "trust in oneself and in others."[4] Clark ascribes the same importance to this issue when he declares that the central task for the adolescent is to discover who they are as a person and then begin

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[1] Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1968), 130.

[2] David Elkind, T*he Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon*, 25th anniversary ed. (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2007), 42.

[3] Ibid., 164-165.

[4] Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 128.

to assert his or herself into the adult society.[5] There is no magic formula for this, so the adolescent begins experimenting in different areas. As a dependent school-age child growing up in a family, there has never been a need to question his or her identity because there has usually been a caring parent to intervene and make decisions.[6] However, as this child goes through Blos' second separation-individuation phase, he or she moves from not knowing or even caring about a personal identity to a point where there is a desperate search to find the unique person.[7] With the separation from the family of origin beginning to take place, the adolescent will look for help in this process outside of the home. Erikson notes that this can become a problem if it goes too far, because a preoccupation with what they appear to be in the eyes of others may not line up with what they feel about themselves.[8] When this happens, the adolescent will struggle to find ways to balance the incongruity. He or she will begin to connect roles and skills that were cultivated earlier in life to solve the dilemma because the adolescent mind is becoming more "explicitly ideological" as it is "searching for some inspiring unification of tradition or anticipated techniques, ideas and ideals" to make life work.[9]

In order for individuation to occur, there must be an integrated sense of identity that brings together an entire set of attitudes, values, and habits that can serve both self

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[5] Chap Clark and Dee Clark, *Disconnected: Parenting Teens in a Myspace World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 54.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 128.

[9] Ibid., 128, 130.

and society.[10] However, the path to this integrated identity is not a straight one. As researchers have discovered, the adolescent goes through a phase of creating multiple selves, or layers, to help them navigate the maze of expectations put on them by parents, teachers, and other adults, while also maintaining and fulfilling the expectations of their adolescent relationships.[11] When Harter and her team of researchers studied this, they saw that the construction of these multiple selves for each different role and relationship was a critical developmental task.[12] These "contextualized identities may correspond to some combination of internal states ('me when I'm happy'), external environments ('me at work'), roles or relationships ('me as a friend'), or experiences ('success')."[13] The irony in the creation of multiple selves is that the adolescent must create them in order to deal with the struggles of this time, but then must find a way to negotiate and organize them so they can eventually be integrated.[14] The good news for the adolescent is that as they continue to develop, they are learning skills that will equip them to normalize the

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[10] David Elkind, *All Grown Up and No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis*, Rev. ed. (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1998), 196.

[11] Chap Clark, *Hurt: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 63.

[12] S. Harter et al., "The Development of Multiple Role-Related Selves During Adolescence," in *Readings on Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood*, ed. Jeffrey J. Arnett (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), 112.

[13] Carolin J. Showers and Virgil Zeigler-Hill, "Compartmentalization and Integration: Evaluative Organization of Contextualized Selves," *Journal of Personality* 75, no. 6 (2007): 1182.

[14] Harter et al., "The Development of Multiple Role-Related Selves During Adolescence," 118.

construction of the multiple selves in such a way that they begin to form a meaningful narrative of a life story.[15]

Clark helps explain how an adolescent copes with this struggle of balancing these multiple selves by comparing it to a "vaudevillian plate spinner who is skilled at getting several plates to spin at once and even making it look easy at times."[16] He goes on to note that what every plate spinner and audience member knows is that everything could fall apart in the next second.[17] This image captures Elkind's belief that it is no single stress that creates problems for the adolescent. Rather, it is the cumulative impact of all individual stressors that creates a problem.

Clark uses the word "candle" to communicate this idea of multiple layers. In his research, he found that the adolescent maintains a separate, solitary candle for every sphere or relationship in his or her world. He explains that these candles are not hypocritical or false selves, but serve as a complete, real self in which the adolescent can move in and out of depending on the environment.[18] Using this language, it could be said that the quest of individuation is to merge the candles into one single candle so there is a uniformity in the way the person addresses the world. In order for that to happen, the adolescent will have to extinguish candles and be willing to pay the price for losing the

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[15] Harter et al., "The Development of Multiple Role-Related Selves During Adolescence," 118.

[16] Clark, *Hurt*, 67.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Chap Clark, "Youth, Family, and Culture Cohort 2009 (Y2)," unpublished class notes for YF723/724, Fuller Theological Seminary, March 2009.

specifics of each candle. However, the adolescent will gain a consistency in his or her approach to life that allows putting down the "vaudevillian plates." When the adolescent is down to one plate, he or she is able to say, "This is who I am and this is how I feel and think about this particular issue."

For the emerging adult, this process of becoming "one candle" can be particularly wearisome, for as Arnett says, it is an age of possibilities. It is not surprising that personal goals shift with changing developmental tasks, role transitions, and life situations.[19] As they progress through this period, the goals shift from education, friends, and traveling, to goals focused on work, family, and health.[20]

As emerging adults attempt to consolidate their candles, they may find themselves withdrawing into a private world. When everyday life is filled with difficult family situations, limited prospects for success in the near future, and an overall discontentment, many adolescents find themselves retreating to a fantasy world where they can feel power and a restored order of life.[21] Others will move into this fantasy world for just the opposite reason. As they tire of the daily monotony of life's routine, they find themselves moving into a world filled with excitement.[22]

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[19] Katariina Salmela-Aro, Kaisa Aunola, and Jari-Erik Nurmi, "Personal Goals During Emerging Adulthood," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 22, no. 6 (Nov 2007): 690.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Astrid Dinter, "Adolescence and Computers: Dimensions of Media-Related Identity Formation, Self-Formation and Religious Value as Challenges for Religious Education," *British Journal of Religious Education* 28, no. 3 (2006): 242.

[22] Ibid.

Of course, not all emerging adults will choose the path of withdrawal. Many emerging adults will choose the path of recklessness. While one might expect this age group to have outgrown this type of behavior, studies show that as a person progresses into late adolescence, there is a higher level of seeking sensations, a desire to break free from societal norms, and, consequently, a higher frequency of reckless behavior.[23] Elkind sees this as the playing out of the individual's personal fable, where he or she believes an imaginary audience is watching every move. This leads the individual to believe he or she is utterly unique, with that uniqueness creating invincibility.[24] Overall, one in ten college students participate in two or more risk-oriented behaviors (defined in this study as lack of physical activity, cigarette smoking, binge drinking, and risky sexual behaviors), with that rate dropping as the students progress into late graduate school.[25] Based on the increasing sexual nature of the culture, sexuality has now become a common area for risky behaviors among emerging adults. Emerging adults are searching for their sexual identities in ways that will often include the exploration of sexual orientation and one's sexual beliefs regarding abstinence, premarital sex, monogamy, contraception, and other sexual behaviors.[26] Specifically addressing emerging adults in

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[23] Graham Bradley and Karen Wildman, "Psychosocial Predictors of Emerging Adults' Risk and Reckless Behaviors," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 31, no. 4 (August 2002): 253.

[24] Elkind, *The Hurried Child*, 137.

[25] Hatice S. Zahan et al., "Health-Related Quality of Life and Behaviors Risky to Health among Adults Aged 18-24 Years in Secondary or Higher Education-United States, 2003-2005," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 41 (2007): 395.

[26] Eva S. Lefkowitz and Meghan M. Gillen, ""Sex Is Just a Normal Part of Life": Sexuality in Emerging Adulthood," in *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*, ed. Jeffrey J. Arnett and Jennifer L. Tanner (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006), 235.

college dormitories, research has shown that the removal of close adult supervision allows for more freedom to engage in sexual behaviors.[27] In their study on body image and sexuality, Gillen and her team found that individuals who are highly dissatisfied with their bodies are more likely than their satisfied peers to engage in risky sexual acts.[28] This age group has found the internet to be a way to explore sexual possibilities that is not quite as dangerous as physical relationships. Dinter sees that internet chat rooms were a new area for sexual experimentation with minimal risks because this medium allowed them to experience a form of virtual self-exploration.[29]

How are emerging adults handling this process of reducing life to a single candle? Arnett answers, "By and large, emerging adults respond to the challenges of identity development not by collapsing into a quivering mass of fear but by making their way gradually toward laying the foundations for an adult life in love and work, with some anxiety but without trauma."[30] This seems to parallel what emerging adults are saying. A national poll showed that 96 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds interviewed agreed with the statement, "I am very sure that someday I will get to where I want to be in life."[31]

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[27] Meghan M. Gillen, Eva S. Lefkowitz, and Cindy L. Shearer, "Does Body Image Play a Role in Risky Sexual Behavior and Attitudes," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 35, no. 2 (April 2006): 244.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Dinter, "Adolescence and Computers," 239.

[30] Jeffrey J. Arnett, "Suffering, Selfish, Slackers? Myths and Reality About Emerging Adults," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 36, no. 1 (2007): 24.

[31] Margot Hornblower, "Great Xpectations of So-Called Slackers," *Time*, July 9, 1997, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,986481,00.html (accessed July 9, 2008).

Autonomy: "Do I/My Choices Matter?"

Individuals who struggle with autonomy do not have a strong sense of self and will question if they matter or have the ability to exert influence in the world around them.[32] For Clark, autonomy is "about being trained to handle and then learn to accept personal responsibility" because the adolescent must move from an external locus of control as a child to an internal locus of control as an adult.[33] According to Rotter's definition, "Internal versus external control refers to the degree to which persons expect that a reinforcement or an outcome of their behavior is contingent on their own behavior or personal characteristics versus the degree to which persons expect that the reinforcement or outcome is a function of chance, luck, or fate, is under the control of powerful others or is simply unpredictable."[34]

As the emerging adult progresses through adolescence, he or she struggles to see if they have what it takes to make it in this world. Clark writes, "The more developed our sense of personal power and ability and our willingness to take responsibility for our choices, the stronger our internal locus of control."[35] This individual does not blame others for negative outcomes or consider it "luck" when things work out well. Erikson warns about the consequences of a lack of autonomy when he wrote, "should a young

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[32] Clark, "Youth, Family, and Culture Cohort 2009 (Y2)."

[33] Clark and Clark, *Disconnected*, 56-57.

[34] Julian B. Rotter, "Internal Versus External Control of Reinforcement: A Case History of a Variable," *American Psychologist* 45, no. 4 (1990): 489.

[35] Clark and Clark, *Disconnected*, 57.

person feel that the environment tries to deprive him too radically of all the forms of expression which permit him to develop and integrate to the next step, he may resist with the wild strength encountered in animals" who are fighting for their lives.[36] This desire to stand tall through life as a unique individual is innate and longs for expression.[37] Erikson draws an interesting conclusion regarding autonomy and job selection when he wrote, "some adolescents prefer not to work at all for a while rather than be forced into an otherwise promising career which would offer success without the satisfaction of functioning with unique excellence."[38] He takes it even a step further when he writes that this desire to make a unique contribution, one that no one else can make, runs so deeply that it is beyond the natural externals of remuneration and status.[39]

The tricky issue for the emerging adult is learning to balance these difficult steps with the attending risks of the life-marker decisions they are beginning to make. This time is about establishing control, making choices, and dealing with the consequences of those decisions.[40] The emerging adult with a healthy family that understands this process is able to remain connected to the family members in such a way that the risks are not so great. However, the emerging adult who does not have a connected family that supports

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[36] Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 130.

[37] Chap Clark and Dee Clark, *Daughters and Dads: Building a Lasting Relationship* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998), 97.

[38] Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 129.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Clark and Clark, *Daughters and Dads*, 99.

this individuation process will struggle during this time, as there is no safety net to counter the risks.

As with identity, there is a process to arrive at the establishment of autonomy. Two studies will be examined here that relate to education. Chubb and her research team looked at the relationship of self-esteem and locus of control in high school. They theorized over the difference in a classroom filled with students governed by "externals" versus "internals."[41] The "external" room would expect luck and chance to be the determining factors in their educational success. In contrast, the "internal" room would be characterized by students who believed their actions and behaviors could bring about their desired educational goals. In Chubb's actual research, they found that a shift occurred between the ninth and twelfth grades to a less externalized locus of control, while there was no significant change in the adolescent's self-esteem during that same span.[42] This study also discovered that while adolescent females reported lower self-esteem than males, there was no significant difference between the genders in the steadily increasing sense of personal empowerment.[43]

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[41] Nancy H. Chubb and Carl I. Fertman, "Adolescent Self-Esteem and Locus of Control: A Longitudinal Study of Gender and Age Differences," *Adolescence* 32, no. 125 (1997): 116.

[42] Ibid., 121.

[43] Ibid., 125.

A second study led by Nordstrom attempted to identify predictors for which emerging adults would move on to graduate school.[44] They examined three variables: internal locus of control, personal grade point average, and consumer orientation. They found that the internal locus of control was the only significant factor predicting the pursuit of graduate studies.[45] This team described those with an internal locus of control as those who perceive they have a "direct impact on their learning, grades, and educational opportunities through the time and effort they put in" whereas those with an external locus of control "believe external factors (e.g., luck, social activities, professors, course requirements, etc.) dictate what they learn and the educational outcomes they derive."[46] With that understanding, their findings do not come as much of a surprise. The students with internalized power see themselves as the "architects of their education," believing that they can influence and direct their education through "managing their time effectively, getting involved in faculty research, working independently on class projects, theses and dissertations, and establishing mentors, practical/internships sites, etc."[47]

This study illustrates the positive results obtained by moving from an external power source to an internal power source. This is the very thing that Tanner specifies as

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[44] Cynthia R. Nordstrom and Dan J. Segrist, "Predicting the Likelihood of Going to Graduate School: The Importance of Locus of Control," *College Student Journal* 43, no. 1 (2009) http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=2009-02694-025&loginpage=Login.asp&site=ehost-live (accessed July 2, 2009).

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

the goal of the emerging adult: to move from other-regulated behavior to self-regulated behavior. This stage of life is filled with opportunities, and emerging adults desire to make the right decisions in order to make their life count. To do so, they need to know they have the power to influence and exert themselves.

Belonging: "Where Do I Fit?"

Arnett notes that "emerging adults live in an individualistic society and are at an individualistic time of life, and the combination makes their self-focus strikingly high."[48] Clark further argues that the "fundamental metanarrative" in our culture "shouts for individualism."[49] This ideology has truly become a cherished value in our country, and has even been expressed at Walt Disney World's Epcot. Located in Epcot's World Showcase, the American Adventure theater has twelve statues, six on each side, that are collectively known as the "Spirits of America." Of the twelve statues, there is one named "Individualism," another named "Independence," and a third named "Self-Reliance." While the cultural trend has been to "go it alone" and not count on anyone, that does not come naturally. There is a innate pull towards relationships with people. As Posterski has written, "For today's teenagers friendship is an end in itself; it is the focus of life."[50]

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[48] Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2004), 213.

[49] Clark and Clark, *Disconnected*, 58.

[50] Donald C. Posterski, *Friendship: A Window on Ministry to Youth*, Expanded ed. (Scarborough, Ont.: Project Teen Canada, 1986), 8.

Erikson notes that adolescents help one another by forming cliques and stereotyping themselves, and then constantly testing the members to insure sustained loyalties to the group.[51] The pull to connect with others is so strong that the adolescent will frequently over-identify with the heroes of the cliques to the point of a complete loss of their own individuality.[52] Safety is the reason that an adolescent is willing to give up so much of his or herself to be a member of a group. This age group can become "remarkably clannish, intolerant, and cruel in their exclusion of others who are *different*."[53]

The verbiage has changed since Erikson's time in that researchers see a difference between cliques and clusters. Clark has identified clusters as a midadolescent technique, based on one's self-concept, used to cope with the difficulties of life.[54] In late adolescence, the individual will move into cliques that are more based on affinity or commonalities.[55] The cliques could be based on similar class schedules, similar fields of interest such as theater, music, or members of an athletic team. Clark illustrates the difference between the two by placing the groups in a circle with interlocked arms, in which the cluster faces outward for protection and the clique faces inward for

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[51] Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 132.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Clark, "Youth, Family, and Culture Cohort 2009 (Y2)."

[55] Ibid.

relationship.[56] Clusters have a loyalty that has been called family-like in that it creates a social-interdependence.[57] In his book, *Friendship*, Posterski writes that "life in the friendship cluster gives young people a place to express themselves and fulfill their need for love."[58] However, it is important to remember that these relationships are primarily built for safety, and there is a set of respected and controlled expectations, loyalties, and values.[59] Lashbrook brings this back into focus with his research, seeing clusters as fulfilling the need to belong while providing a cohesive unit in a safe place.[60] Clusters are gender specific and remain relatively small in size, ranging from four or five adolescents up to a maximum of eight to ten.[61]

The cohesion of a cluster is predicated on what is known as the "social hierarchy scale" where self-concept can be measured on a scale of 1 to 10.[62] Clark explains the scoring system with the demeanor and the impact of the various ranges of score.[63] The 9s and 10s are considered low on the scale, to the point of having almost no social relationships. There is still a struggle for the 6s, 7s, and 8s, because they are constantly

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[56] Clark, "Youth, Family, and Culture Cohort 2009 (Y2)."

[57] Clark, *Hurt*, 74-75.

[58] Posterski, *Friendship,* 14.

[59] Clark, *Hurt*, 75.

[60] Jeffrey T. Lashbrook, "Fitting In: Exploring the Emotional Dimension of Adolescent Peer Pressure," *Adolescence* 35, no. 140 (2000): 752-755.

[61] Clark, *Hurt*, 79-80.

[62] Clark, "Youth, Family, and Culture Cohort 2009 (Y2)."

[63] Ibid.

questioning their worth and value to the overall community. The 3s, 4s, and 5s have a solid base for relationships and may even welcome a lower score (such as an 8). The 1s and 2s have a strong base for relationships, with 1s serving as leaders that may or may not be recognized as such by their peers, but are definitely recognized by the teachers and administrators. With clusters based on self-concept, the adolescent's ranking on the social hierarchy is based on the integration of where the adolescent perceives his or her rank on this scale and where the adolescent perceives others would place him or her on this scale.[64] Once the adolescent's score is set, he or she will assimilate into a cluster with the same ranking on the scale, and there will be very little chance of interacting with clusters that differ by more than one marker.[65] For example, 3s may interact with 2s and 4s, but beyond that there will be little interaction.

As previously mentioned, the midadolescent need for clusters gives way to the arrival of cliques in late adolescence. Cliques are less about safety than clusters. As Arnett notes, "Emerging adults who place concern for others at the center of their conception of adulthood are relatively rare."[66] The midadolescent idea of finding "safety in numbers" has passed, and the focus has become the cultural ideas such as "individualism," "independence," and "self-reliance." Part of this may be by choice, but part may be learned. Arnett writes that "emerging adulthood is an exceptionally

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[64] Clark, "Youth, Family, and Culture Cohort 2009 (Y2)."

[65] Ibid.

[66] Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, 214.

unstructured time in life when people are least likely to have the benefit of structured institutions supporting them."[67]

On that basis, emerging adults must discover how to move into a community in which they can belong as a "single-candled" person. Erikson notes that adolescents "seek to identify with values and ideologies that transcend the immediate concerns of family and self and have historical continuity."[68] However, according to Putnam, suburban communities have assisted in creating the problem of isolation as they have a "surprising low rate of civic engagement and neighborliness even within their boundaries."[69] Sadly, these are the lessons being passed on to future generations, and the experiences defining current emerging adults. According to Seider, the factors that were "found to contribute to the development of a commitment to community service in adolescents and emerging adults included service-oriented parents and role models, a strong religious faith, early exposure to service opportunities, experiences of early hardship, and triggering events."[70] A positive note found in Seider's research is that missing factors can still be learned through what he refers to as "replacement" of the learned worldview. He writes, "Students who experience a 'replacement' of their worldview describe academic experiences that lead to the adoption of a new worldview prioritizing community

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[67] Arnett, "Suffering, Selfish, Slackers," 25.

[68] Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 32.

[69] Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, 1st Touchstone ed. (New York: Touchstone, 2001), 210.

[70] Scott Seider, "Catalyzing a Commitment to Community Service in Emerging Adults," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 22, no. 6 (2007): 618-619.

service."[71] Whether education gets all of the credit for worldview replacement is questionable, but there are some positive signs that the replacement is occurring. These findings are demonstrated by the fact that short-term volunteer jobs through Americorps and the Peace Corps are more popular with emerging adults than any other age group.[72] According to the Corporation for National & Community Service, "The number of college students volunteering grew by nearly 600,000 from 2.7 million in 2002 to 3.3 million in 2005."[73]

Boute and her team studied the importance of friendships in the transition from living at home to independent living in college. The trend toward cliques that are largely based on affinity and proximity continued in first-year college students. Interviewees "indicated that their first friends at university were individuals who share the same interests, values, sense of humor, sexual orientation, musical tastes, and hobbies," as well as those who had undergone "similar experiences and engaged in similar activities."[74] As in all relationships, these first-year college students commented that a key factor in the development of relationships was the amount of time spent with their new friends and the depth at which they shared and interacted.[75] Students now had the ability to ease the

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[71] Seider, "Catalyzing a Commitment to Community Service in Emerging Adults," 619.

[72] Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late the Twenties," *American Psychologist* 55, no. 5 (2000): 474.

[73] Lillian Dote, Kevin Cramer, Nathan Dietz and Jr., Robert Grimm, "College Students Helping America," *Corporation for National & Community Service*. October 2006, http://www.nationalservice.org/pdf/06_1016_RPD_college_exec.pdf (accessed July 8, 2008).

[74] Vanessa M. Buote et al., "The Importance of Friends: Friendship and Adjustment Among 1st-Year University Students," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 22, no. 6 (November 2007).

[75] Ibid., 682.

transition into this new lifestyle as these new friends provided both "a sense of belonging and companionship" and a "tangible assistance" in the routines of life, served as "important sources of advice," provided "models of appropriate behavior," expanded "the social network," helped "manage stress," provided "encouragement," "normalized difficulties," and "perhaps the most important way . . . simply listening and providing a sympathetic ear."[76]

These findings certainly seem to contradict the fundamental concept that the United States pushes of "do it yourself." Emerging adults need to find a place in which they fit and a way to relate to the rest of the world. Up to this point, the individual "fit" is at home under parents, and then in adolescence the "fit" is following the crowd. Now the "fit" is unique to the single candle this emerging adult carries so that he or she does not walk through life in isolation.

Psychosocial Dynamics and Issues Affecting Emerging Adults

Every generation must deal with the stress of growing up and adjusting to life, but the severe stress level that this current generation is carrying is taking its toll. Since sociologists are always looking for labels to attach to generations, this generation of emerging adults has earned the label of "the stressed generation."[77] According to a poll conducted by the Associated Press, one in five undergraduate students is constantly

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[76] Buote et al., "The Importance of Friends," 683-685.

[77] Chap Clark, "Hurt: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers," Seminar, The Oaks Camp and Conference Center, 27 February 2008.

stressed to the point that even spring break adds to the list of anxieties that they feel.[78] When the simple idea of taking a break from one's regular routine becomes another stressor, it is time for a culture to begin asking some hard questions about what is going on and how these students arrived at this point.

In his book, *Hurt: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*, Clark chronicles the systematic abandonment of adolescents and the repercussions of that abandonment.[79] This group has had to learn how to grow up, on their own, in a culture that is changing so rapidly that even adults are having a hard time adjusting. Clark summarizes the problem well with the simple truth that these adolescents "have been handed too little of what really matters."[80] The responsibility of preparing and training these adolescents is primarily the responsibility of the parents. Even still, as these parents abdicated their responsibilities in this area, no one else has stepped in to help fill the void. Consequently, these adolescents have to figure out life on their own. Elkind defines a "need imbalance" as one group meeting its own needs at the expense of another, and asserts that the parental "abrogation of the responsibilities of adulthood is the single most powerful contributor to the new imbalance and to the stress that imbalance puts on children."[81] For the imbalance to be corrected, parents will have to begin to parent again. However, the

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[78] Associated Press, "1 in 5 Undergrads is Constantly Stressed," *Mental Health - msnbc.com*, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/23693229 (accessed March 18, 2008).

[79] Clark, *Hurt*, 44.

[80] Clark, "Hurt," 27 February 2008.

[81] David Elkind, *Ties that Stress: The New Family Imbalance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 9, 227.

problem has also been intensified due to a breakdown of all of the other support structures in the adolescent's life. The youth leaders, the teachers, the coaches, and the extended family members all bear some of the responsibility for this. The solution is for the adults to act like adults and be there for these adolescents, because their lack of presence or involvement is forcing adolescents to figure out how to survive on their own.[82]

An integral part of adolescence is identity formation, whereby an individual can begin to take responsibility for his or her life. This process is difficult enough when an adolescent has a safety net, but without one it becomes treacherous. Life becomes a series of trial and error situations to see what works. College students go through this trial and error process as they are forced to declare a major. They will often change that declaration multiple times, especially in their first two years, as they "try on possible occupational futures, discard them, and pursue others."[83] The living situation is similar as they "try on" different living situations, and therefore, have the highest rate of residential change of any age group.[84] Even through all of these changes, this age group believes that one day they will figure it all out.

Another ambiguity facing this group is the moving target of how one defines adulthood. Research has demonstrated that the event markers that once defined adulthood, such as an education, a career, marriage, and parenthood are no longer the

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[82] Clark, *Hurt*, 42-43.

[83] Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood," 474.

[84] Ibid., 471.

markers for emerging adults. Now the target is a combination of individualistic qualities of character that demonstrate self-sufficiency like accepting responsibility for self, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent.[85] A definition with multiple subjective components leaves most of this age group feeling unsettled along this continuum. That ambiguity forces comparisons about where they stand in relation with others. Even more troubling is how emerging adults feel about their own place on the continuum. In a poll conducted by Nelson and Barry, they found that when 18- to 25-year-olds were asked if they had reached adulthood, 25 percent indicated that they had, 6 percent indicated that they had not, and 69 percent indicated that they had reached adulthood in some respects.[86] Arnett points out that this age group is not alone in believing they are not yet adults. An overwhelming majority of parents (80 percent) do not believe that their own 18- to 26-year old children are adults.[87] Consequently, the majority of this group do not feel like adults, and are being told they are not adults. They do not know where they fit into society because society has not given them a label until now, with the label emerging adults.[88]

As this group strives for this elusive goal of identity formation, the wounds of the abandonment are again exposed. Elkind explains that the process of identity formation

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[85] Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood," 472-473.

[86] Larry J. Nelson and Carolyn McNamara Barry, "Distinguishing Features of Emerging Adulthood," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 20, no. 2 (2005): 253.

[87] Jeffrey Arnett and Larry Nelson, interview by Patti Neighmond, "'Generation Next' in the Slow Lane to Adulthood," *Morning Edition*, National Public Radio, December 20, 2007.

[88] Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood," 469, 471.

requires an enveloping of adult standards, values, and beliefs that the adolescent can challenge and confront as he or she develops his or her own standards, values, and beliefs.[89] Therein lies the problem for this generation. These adolescents never had the benefit of enveloping adult standards, values, and beliefs because they never saw them, but were left to their own devices to make life work. For those adolescents who have some support structures in their lives to assist them in the process, the process may be a little more stable, but it is not without complication. Elkind writes, "Today, however, adults have fewer standards, values, and beliefs and hold onto them less firmly than was true in the past. The adolescent must, therefore, struggle to find an identity without the benefit of this supportive adult envelope."[90] Whether the adolescent suffers from complete abandonment or partial abandonment, the message communicated is that the adolescent is alone in navigating the course to adulthood.

The positive news is that Nelson and Barry found 25 percent of emerging adults who felt they had reached adulthood. They found that those who believed they had reached adulthood had a better overall identity, could identify the type of partner they were looking for, were less depressed, and demonstrated fewer risk behaviors than those who did not believe they had reached adulthood.[91] Going a step further, they found that when an emerging adult shifted to viewing himself or herself as an adult, it coincided

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[89] David Elkind, *A Sympathetic Understanding of the Child: Birth to Sixteen* (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1994), 197.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Nelson and Barry, "Distinguishing Features," 255.

with the resolution of one's identity.[92] The fruit of this successful resolution is an increase in self-esteem, liking and respecting one's self, as well as being liked and respected by others.[93] Unfortunately, while twenty-five percent had been successful in their quest for identity formation, there is another seventy-five percent who are still in the battle. This group experiences the converse of the emotions the first group enjoys. They frequently struggle with depression that is brought on by their inability to discover their identity, the transitory nature of dating relationships, and an overall increase in loneliness.[94]

In addition to depression, the emerging adults who remain in the struggle for resolving identity issues sometimes fall into other dangerous patterns. The stress that they feel often leads them to do the same things adults do when they feel stressed, as they engage in actions that are destructive to themselves, to others, or to both.[95] When college students were asked about suicide, the findings revealed that over the past year 16 percent of the students had friends talk about wanting to end their lives, 11 percent of the students had friends attempt suicide, and 9 percent of the students had thought seriously about ending their own life.[96] As serious as those numbers are, they do not include the staggering increases of emerging adults who self-injure. Purington and Whitlock offer

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[92] Nelson and Barry, "Distinguishing Features," 256.

[93] Elkind, *All Grown Up and No Place to Go*, 196.

[94] Nelson and Barry, "Distinguishing Features," 258.

[95] Elkind, *Ties that Stress*, 188.

[96] Associated Press, "1 in 5 Undergrads is Constantly Stressed," (accessed March 18, 2008).

the following definition for self-injure: "Sometimes called 'cutting,' 'self-mutilation,' or 'self-harm,' a precise definition of the behavior is difficult to come by. In its broadest definition self-injury is an act in which an individual intentionally alters or destroys body tissue for purposes that are not aesthetic nor socially sanctioned."[97]

There are many behaviors that would fall into this category, but the most common forms of self-injuring are intentional carving or cutting of the skin, subdermal tissue scratching, burning, ripping or pulling skin or hair, swallowing toxic substances, self bruising, and the breaking of bones.[98] Many professionals assert that young people today possess fewer coping mechanisms and face more stressful situations than in the past.[99] This premise is graphically supported by the statistics that show about 17 percent of college students (20 percent of women and 14 percent of men) report that they have cut, burned, carved or harmed themselves in other ways.[100] Of those who have self-injured, the study found that about 75 percent of the self-injurers had engaged in the practice more than once, and 70 percent of that group reported using multiple methods to hurt themselves.[101] These numbers illustrate the depth of the pain that emerging adults are

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[97] Amanda Purington and Janis Whitlock, "Research facts and findings: Self-injury fact sheet," *ACT for Youth Upstate Center for Excellence*, August 2004, http://www.actforyouth.net/documents/fACTS_Aug04.pdf (accessed July 9, 2008).

[98] Cornell Research Program on Self-Injurious Behavior in Adolescents and Young Adults, "What Do We Know About Self-Injury?" *Cornell University Family Life Development Cente*r, http://www.crpsib.com/whatissi.asp (accessed July 9, 2008).

[99] Cornell University, "Self-injury Is Prevalent Among College Students, Survey Shows," *Science Daily*, June 5, 2006, http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2006/06/060605155351.htm (accessed July 9, 2008).

[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid.

experiencing. Routine conversations regarding the taking of one's life or the chronic act of self-injuring are incompatible with have been called the "volitional years."

The issues of suicide and self-injury are severe examples of how some emerging adults attempt to handle the stress of transitioning to adulthood. The more routine pattern is for emerging adults to demonstrate high-risk behaviors. There are several factors that seem to contribute to this risk-taking pattern, such as an ongoing need for sensation seeking, and high personal freedom coupled with low level of social responsibility.[102] While one may expect that this age group would be growing out of this type of behavior, studies show that as a person progresses into late adolescence, there is a higher level of sensation seeking, a lesser degree of peer pressure, and, consequently, a higher frequency of reckless behavior.[103] In addition to age, another strong predictor of reckless behavior for males is less higher education.[104] It comes as no surprise that one area where this reckless behavior manifests itself is on the road. Research shows that within this emerging adult group, driving more than twenty miles per hour over the speed limit was a widespread practice, with nearly twenty-five percent of the respondents reporting that practice weekly.[105] Other reckless behaviors that have been studied include substance abuse, binge drinking, and promiscuous sexual activity. Research has shown that the high prevalence of these risk behaviors is the result of less monitoring by parents and low

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[102] Bradley and Wildman, "Psychosocial Predictors," 253.

[103] Ibid., 259.

[104] Ibid., 264.

[105] Ibid., 262.

constraint to adult roles.[106] This group has a considerable amount of freedom, very little responsibility, some discretionary financial resources for the first time, and very little oversight. All of these things are pushing this age group to seek outlets for adventure in the midst of incredible stress.

Cultural and Environmental Dynamics and Issues Affecting Emerging Adults

In the same way that psychosocial issues create stresses for the emerging adult, the culture and environment create stresses that are passively shaping the way an emerging adult views the world. For example, the home environment is shaping emerging adults who still live at home, or those who have moved back home with their parents. Research shows that this environment is actually damaging for the emerging adult, as the quality of the parental relationship is inversely related to physical proximity with the parents.[107] While living at home may save the emerging adult money on rent and food, he or she is sacrificing a quality of relationship with his or her parents and will experience a poorer psychological adjustment. According to Mogelonsky, 20 percent of all 25-year-old Americans live at home and have created what is now known as the "full-nest syndrome."[108]

One cultural aspect that has had dramatic changes over the last five decades is the college environment. During that time period, the number of people in their early

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[106] Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood," 475.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Marcia Mogelonsky, "The Rocky Road to Adulthood," *American Demographics* 18, no. 5 (May 1996): 26.

twenties who enrolled in college has more than doubled, with more women than men now enrolled.[109] Over the last twenty years, enrollment at graduate schools has skyrocketed, as approximately one-third of college graduates enrolled in a postgraduate program the year following graduation.[110] These numbers demonstrate how slowly these emerging adults are entering into the work force. As previously discussed, this group does not view events such as graduation as a necessary transition to adulthood, so they may not have any impetus to move efficiently through a degree program. In fact, undergraduate programs are frequently pursued in non-linear fashion in which the students come and go, and pick up classes occasionally as they fit into the rest of their schedules.[111] The longer these individuals remain in school, the greater the delay for them to take on adult responsibilities. They are in essence taking more and more time preparing for adulthood as opposed to entering into it.

Another cultural issue that is plaguing this age group is the proliferation of pornography. Research has demonstrated its prominent feature in this current culture.[112] There was a time in which the stigma of going into a store to buy a magazine or rent a movie served as a deterrent to pornography. However, due to the widespread availability of personal computers (beginning 1982 to 1985), Internet access (beginning in 1995), and

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[109] Arnett and Nelson, "'Generation Next'," December 20, 2007.

[110] Mogelonsky, "The Rocky Road to Adulthood," 35.

[111] Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood," 471.

[112] Jason S. Carroll, Laura M. Padilla-Walker, Larry J. Nelson, Chad D. Olson, Carolyn McNamara Barry and Stephanie D. Madsen, "Generation XXX: Pornography Acceptance and Use Among Emerging Adults," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 23, no. 1 (January 2008): 23.

cable television complete with pay-per-view movies (beginning in 1990 to 1995), the deterrent has been removed.[113] With these technological advances in pornography and the proficiency of emerging adults with technology, it is not surprising that studies show emerging adults have the highest rates of use of pornography.[114] The rates are staggering: 87 percent of males and 31 percent of females reported using pornography at some level. This same study also examined usage patterns, and found that of those male and female respondents who use pornography, 20 percent of the males and more than 50 percent of the females report every-other-day use (three to five times a week).[115] While these numbers show that more men than women utilize pornography, they also show that women who utilize pornography are much more likely to develop into habitual users.

The impact of pornography usage continues to be studied, as health professionals across disciplines report a substantial increase in clients seeking treatment for sexual addiction and other associated issues of pornography use.[116] While the research continues, several trends have already been identified. One trend is the delaying of marriage, as there is a significant correlation between one's acceptance of pornography and a desire for later marriage.[117] This delay in marriage has often been attributed to an

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[113] Timothy Buzzell, "Demographic Characteristics of Persons Using Pornography in Three Technological Contexts," *Sexuality & Culture* 9, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 34.

[114] Timothy Buzzell, "The Effects of Sophistication, Access and Monitoring on Use of Pornography in Three Technological Contexts, *Deviant Behavior* 26, no. 2 (Mar/Apr 2005): 122.

[115] Carroll et al., "Generation XXX," 16-17.

[116] Ibid., 8.

[117] Ibid., 21.

avoidance of adult responsibilities, but this study shows that pornography is also a factor that must be considered. Another trend is the effect of acceptance of pornography on one's values. One research team concludes,

> Pornography acceptance among women was a stronger correlate with permissive sexuality, alcohol use, binge drinking, and cigarette smoking than actual pornography use. For men, the acceptance of pornography was more highly correlated with their sexual attitudes and family formation values than was pornography use. These findings highlight that scholars need to define pornography in terms of both values and behavior.[118]

The influence of pornography on values and behaviors not only delays marriage, but also derails marriages. Value adjustments such as permissive sexuality and non-marital cohabitation are associated with less marital stability in future marriages. There may be a perception that pornography usage is a normal, healthy practice for emerging adults, but the research does not support that argument.

In addition to the impact of higher education and pornography on this age group, another factor affecting this group is the impact of a declining religiosity among emerging adults. This decline has been so recognizable that the secularization of the university experience has served as a convenient scapegoat. However, studies show a very different picture. Emerging adults who avoid college exhibit the most extensive patterns of religious decline, whereas 82 percent of college students will maintain at least a static level of religious involvement.[119] In fact, the students who continue to pursue education through undergraduate studies and postgraduate studies are the least likely to

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[118] Carroll et al., "Generation XXX," 24.

[119] Jeremy E. Uecker, Mark D. Regnerus and Margaret L. Vaaler, "Losing My Religion: The Social Sources of Religious Decline in Early Adulthood," *Social Forces* 85, no. 4 (June 2007): 1683, 1667.

experience a diminished participation in religious activity.[120] The emerging adults who remain actively involved in practicing one's faith are the same ones who continue to pursue education.

Research has shown that lack of education is not the only factor that contributes to a decline in religiosity. While all faith traditions show some decline in involvement among this age group, the traditions that suffer the largest declines are the mainline Protestant and Catholic Churches.[121] Researchers have offered theories as to why these two traditions experience the most significant declines, but there have been no conclusive findings to support those theories.

Cohabitation also contributes to declining participation in church.[122] Conversely, marriage among emerging adults actually contributes to curbing this decline in religiosity. It appears that the decline is not based on age, schedules, or the relationship status, but on the specific stance the faith has on cohabitation.[123] However, while some cohabitating couples stop attending services after experiencing criticism, many cohabitating couples stopped attending for internal reasons, such as the anticipation of criticism.[124]

Risk behaviors among this age group are another factor in declining religiosity. Sex outside of marriage (as in the case of cohabitating couples), promiscuous sexual

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[120] Uecker, Regnerus and Vaaler, "Losing My Religion," 1667.

[121] Ibid., 1676.

[122] Ibid., 1677.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Ibid., 1685.

activity, illicit drug use, and alcohol use have all been shown to lead to diminished religiosity.[125] In some cases, moderation in these behaviors does not affect one's religiosity. For example, non-frequent alcohol usage and maintaining one's virginity do not impact participation. However, as the frequency of intercourse increases, participation declines.[126] On this basis, it appears that risk behaviors affect one's religiosity when the behaviors become habitual and excessive.

One last factor will be discussed here regarding the decline in religiosity among emerging adults. This age group is diverse in their religious beliefs, and they do not place much value on religious involvement. For example, while there remains a high interest in spiritual concepts amongst this group that has a declining religiosity.[127] When asked about the importance of their religious beliefs, 83 percent answered either somewhat important or very important. When asked about the importance of religious faith in their daily life, 74 percent answered somewhat important or very important. When asked about attending religious services, 46 percent answered that they attend services only one to two times a year. Finally, when asked about how important it was to attend religious services, 42 percent answered not at all. Despite the diversity in emerging adults, there appears to be a unified statement demonstrated by this survey. This group cares about spiritual things, but they consider the corporate gathering of their traditions to be of little value.

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[125] Uecker, Regnerus and Vaaler, "Losing My Relgion," 1668.

[126] Ibid., 1681.

[127] Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, 168.

CHAPTER 3

EXAMINING GRACE CHURCH, WICHITA FALLS, TEXAS

Grace Church[1] began meeting in 1962 and was formally established in 1963 in Wichita Falls, Texas.[2] Discouraged by what the founders saw as legalism and rigidity within some other churches in the area, they set out to teach the Scriptures while minimizing unnecessary church structures. In the last forty-five years, the church has grown to over 850 families with the singular mission: "Grace Church exists to raise up mature disciples of Jesus Christ."[3] For this current year, the leadership has identified three areas of focus: first, to increase the expression of Christ's love through the church body; second, to commission a group who intentionally walks with others through the process of discovering their divine calling; and third, to demonstrate a widespread sense of belonging to the church family.

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[1] Grace Church will be referred to "Grace" throughout this paper. The capitalization of Grace will differentiate it from the doctrine of grace.

[2] "A Guide to Grace Church," in-house publication, Revised April 2010 (Wichita Falls, TX: Grace Church).

[3] "Grace Church - What We Believe," http://gracechurch.com/?page_id=28 (accessed May 27, 2010).

From the very beginning, Grace has been a "Dallas Seminary" church.[4] When the founders sought to start a Bible study with the hopes that it would grow into a church, they made the two-hour drive to Dallas to meet with the seminary president about starting a church. This led to the small group hiring a seminary student to drive to Wichita Falls once a week to teach the Bible study. In chronicling Dallas Seminary's history, Hannah speaks on the "unique blends of differing heritages" seen at Dallas Seminary when he writes,

> The school is a hybrid; it is the blending of tradition opposites: Augustinian concepts of sin and grace, the Brethren heritage of ecclesiastical separation with its dispensationalist underpinnings, and holiness subjectivism and otherworldliness. It eschews the broadness of evangelicalism, while at the same time rejecting the ecclesiastical and moral narrowness of fundamentalism. Such eclecticism is the school's operative philosophy of service to the body of Christ worldwide.[5]

This same type of "hybrid" theology that Hannah describes is evident at Grace. As seen in the national patterns described by Uecker, Regnerus, and Vaaler, the decline of attendance in the mainstream denominations has provided a steady influx of people into Grace.[6] For many of these people, Grace becomes the safe place to attend that does not feel completely foreign, as it may have enough elements from their previous church.

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[4] While the formal name of the seminary is Dallas Theological Seminary, it is frequently shortened and referred to simply as Dallas Seminary.

[5] John Hannah, *An Uncommon Union: Dallas Theological Seminary and American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 23-24.

[6] See Jeremy E. Uecker, Mark D. Regnerus and Margaret L. Vaaler, "Losing My Religion: The Social Sources of Religious Decline in Early Adulthood," Social Forces 85, no. 4 (June 2007).

Grace has also been viewed somewhat as a "middle ground" for families with differing church backgrounds.

In addition to Grace's similarities to Dallas Seminary regarding a hybrid theology, the history of these two entities are remarkably parallel. Hannah's critiques the image and perception of the "Dallas man," promoted by the seminary itself, as being one where the school's graduates were "a cut above" and possessed "superior theological insights."[7] However, in an attempt to recast a vision for the school's graduates, the seminary hired a non-academician as president in 1994 who sought to address this "detrimental and dangerous" ideal that lead to "arrogance, an unteachable spirit, and pride."[8] From this point forward, knowledge would have a context, in that, "Knowledge is crucial, but the heart is central to the development of the Lord's servants."[9]

In a similar way, Grace's desire to be biblically accurate, attended by the perception of having superior theological insights, has created a separateness from the community that the church has had to address. The early years of Grace left the community feeling as though the church was a cult of some kind. Thankfully, Grace's prominence in the community has diminished that perception over the years. That change, as in the case with Dallas Seminary, is the fruit of reexamining the church's vision for what the people should be offered. In his 1911 speech to the student body of Princeton Theological Seminary, B. B. Warfield exhorted the students that, "Learning,

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[7] Hannah, *An Uncommon Union*, 294.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., 295.

though indispensable, is not the most indispensable thing for a minister . . . . A minister must be learned, on pain being utterly incompetent for his work. But before and above being learned, a minister must be godly."[10] Although Warfield was addressing students, the fact that Grace is a "classroom" church necessitates that the church must heed his exhortation and offer more than classroom instruction. The kind of training that Warfield encourages requires consistent, authentic relationships.

A church of ministers, who has been trained in such way, has the capacity to make a substantial impact in her community. While Wichita Falls has approximately 107,000 residents, the surrounding area (defined as within a sixty mile radius) has a total population of 393,000 people.[11] The city is also located within two hours of two major cities, each of which has more that one million residents: the Dallas/Ft. Worth Metroplex and Oklahoma City. In addition to those numbers, Wichita Falls hosts both an Air Force Base and a university. Sheppard Air Force Base (SAFB) offers over 1,100 training programs producing more than 87,000 graduates a year. One of these programs, the Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training Program, trains pilots from thirteen NATO nations, providing the area with a broad international influence.[12] Midwestern State University

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[10] Benjamin B. Warfield, "The Religious Life of Theological Students," *Masters Seminary Journal* 6 (Fall 1995): 182.

[11] "Wichita Falls, Tx - Official Website - More About Wichita Falls," http://www.cwftx.net/index.aspx?NID=925 (accessed May 27, 2010).

[12] "Sheppard Air Force Base - Library - Fact Sheets - 82nd Training Wing," http://www.sheppard.af.mil/library/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=5282 (accessed May 27, 2010).

(MSU) has just over 6,300 students that represent 42 different states and 53 different countries.[13]

Most people would consider Texas to be within the "Bible Belt," and the sheer number of churches in the area supports that stereotype. A simple search on Google yielded a result of 161 churches within the immediate vicinity.[14] With all of the churches in the area, it would seem that everyone living in the city would attend a church. In addition, with the median age in Wichita Falls at 31.9, one might think that the city's churches would have the ability to have a terrific impact on the emerging adults. The first assumption is wrong, but the second assumption is accurate.

The reality is that there are not many entry-level jobs in Wichita Falls, and the nearby large metropolitan areas seem to draw a great number of emerging adults away from the area. The median age illustrates that the community is a family-friendly environment, as more than half of the adult residents are married.[15] Even still, with SAFB and MSU in the city, there is a constant influx of emerging adults coming through the community. With that said, Grace is faced with an important question of how to do a better job of equipping these emerging adults for life as we have the great privilege of assisting their transition into adulthood.

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[13] "Midwestern State University - Quick Facts About MSU," http://www.mwsu.edu/quickfacts/ (accessed May 27, 2010).

[14] "Wichita Falls Churches - Find a Church in Wichita Falls Texas," http://www.usachurch.com/texas/wichita_falls/churches.htm (accessed May 27, 2010).

[15] "Wichita Falls, Texas (Tx) Profile," http://www.city-data.com/city/Wichita-Falls-Texas.html (accessed May 27, 2010).

PART TWO

BUILDING A THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

CHAPTER 4

BUILDING A THEOLOGY

There are two components that must be examined in order to understand what the Scriptures say about ministering to this age group. A person must begin with sound exegesis of the Scriptures and discern the relevant texts that speak to this issue. Once that step has been completed, the truths of those passages must be examined in light of how the Church has traditionally addressed the topic. Then praxis can be developed for the Church as she moves forward to more effectively minister to this age group.

Biblical Exegesis

While there are no specific biblical passages that use the labels of "late adolescence" or "emerging adults," there are many passages that address issues that are pertinent to this discussion. Passages that address God's household, community, and the determining of one's life course are all relevant in understanding Scripture's attitude towards this age group.

The Household of God

Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Eph 2:19).[1] This word *oikos* (Gk. οἶκος), translated "household," is used only three times by Paul and speaks of the incredible truth that Gentiles have been brought into the family of God.[2] Whereas the Gentile believers in this church had been viewed as simply strangers visiting from another land, Paul's words meant that they had become fellow citizens and had obtained the full rights of citizenship.[3] Moreover, Paul does not stop there as he draws an even more intimate picture of this relationship by stating that these former Gentiles are of the same household as the Jewish believers, thus making a new, larger family. Bruce endorses this understanding of the new family structure, which was difficult for Jewish believers to accept, when he writes,

> If the community is viewed as a house or household, the Gentile believers are full members of the family—not household servants but sons and daughters, with all the rights of inheritance that sons and daughters enjoy. The Father to whom they have access is the same Father as he to whom their brothers and sisters of Jewish origin have access—it is by the same Spirit that his Gentile and Jewish children alike acknowledge him as their Father.[4]

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[1] Unless otherwise indicated all Bible references in this paper are to the *New King James Version* (*NKJV*) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1982).

[2] Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 4, *The Epistles of Paul* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931), 528.

[3] William Hendriksen, *Ephesians,* New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1967), 141.

[4] F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 302-303.

This word *oikos* was perfect for Paul because the word would have been known to the entire Greek-speaking world, as its usage dated back to early Mycenaean Greek and it had been handed down from Homer.[5] While the term would have originally referred to a structure as a dwelling place, it acquired the additional idea of a "household (those bound together by sharing the same dwelling place), and in a broader sense that of family and clan, and even that of the still bigger tribal unit (e.g. the house of Judah)."[6] As the word was applied to the New Testament Christian community, ideas and concepts between Israel's relationship with God and the Church began to run together. Goetzmann explains that in this particular passage, Ephesians 2:19-22, "the ideas contained in the terms *house of God* and *temple of God* naturally run into one another . . . as no less than six different derivatives of *oikos* (nevertheless, not *oikos* itself) are used to describe the spiritual reality of the community under the metaphor of the temple and of the building."[7]

The imagery of this passage is clear. In God's household, there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles because this household refers to *all* (emphasis added) members regardless of social or personal position.[8] They are one family under God's leadership. The equality that Paul communicates here is not only true across genealogical

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[5] Jurgen Goetzmann, "House, Build, Manage, Steward," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, edited by Colin Brown, vol. 2, 247-251 (Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation, 1976), 247.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., 249.

[8] Cleon L. Rogers, Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 438.

boundaries, but also across age divisions. As such, emerging adults have been invited into this household and have been made full members of this new larger family.

Community

The idea of community is a common theme seen in the New Testament when characteristics of the Church are addressed. As the early Church was being formed, Luke recorded that "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). While the present day Church has seemingly reduced the fellowship spoken of in this verse to a casual conversation over doughnuts and coffee, the early Church saw it as something much deeper. According to Hauck, *koinonia* (Gk. κοινωνία) means "fellow" or "participant" and "implies fellowship or sharing with someone or in something."[9] He further explains that this participation or fellowship has an especially "close bond" as it "expresses a two-sided relation."[10] It becomes clear that the relationship has two nuances that must be understood. First, there is an investment that each participant makes into the overall group and to the individuals within that group. Second, each participant has the privilege of taking from the group. Everyone here is equal, investing and withdrawing regularly from the group. As such, the Church is called to *koinonia*, a spiritual term that describes the "fellowship of brotherly concord established and expressed in the life of the

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[9] Friedrich Hauck, "κοινωνός," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Gerhard Kittel and Geoffrey W. Bromily, vol. 3, 797-809 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 797.

[10] Ibid., 798.

community."[11] This type of fellowship was so rare that the Greek and Hellenistic worlds saw this term as "the evident, unbroken fellowship between the gods and men."[12] And yet, it is this type of fellowship that the Church is called to exhibit. So lofty is the goal that this "brotherly bond between men was taken up by the philosophers to denote the ideal that is to be sought."[13] This lofty goal was reached in the early Church as Luke records the following testimony, "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:47)."

It is important to note that the result of this deep fellowship not only served the good of the early Church, but also the entire geographical area. This type of fellowship, which the current Church has reduced to a cheap imitation, drew outsiders into God's household because it was unlike anything the world could generate or sustain. In the words of Schattenmann, this fellowship was "the unanimity and unity brought about by the Spirit where the individual was completely upheld by the community."[14]

Other passages communicate this idea of community using different vocabulary. Paul frequently utilizes the word "one" to communicate the relationship among the

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[11] Hauck, "κοινωνός," 809.

[12] Johannes Schattenmann, "Fellowship," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, edited by Colin Brown, vol. 1, 639-644 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 639.

[13] Ibid., 640.

[14] Ibid., 642.

participants of a particular fellowship. In Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church he writes, "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also *is* Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many" (1 Cor 12:12-14). Paul's repetitious use of "one," which is used seven times in three verses, illustrates this community in the Church. Kistemaker writes, "The human body is a highly diversified organism. Each member has its own distinct function but also contributes to the working of the entire body. So it is with the body of Christ, in which every member has received some spiritual gift. In this body the employment of each gift is designed to serve not the individual member but the entire church."[15]

It is important to note that while Paul is calling the Church to unity, he makes allowance for diversity. This one body is comprised of all the "racial, cultural, and social differences that existed in the Corinthian church: there were Jews and Greeks, slaves and free."[16] And yet, even with that level of diversity, this fellowship could come together and worship God as a collective, unified body. The very fact that they could experience this level of fellowship was an act of worship in and of itself, as they laid down personal agendas and biases to submit to the Head of this local body. Paul writes a similar message to the church at Ephesus. Once again, Paul relies on the repetitious use of "one"

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[15] Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1993), 429.

[16] Ibid., 430.

to illustrate the calling of the church to embrace one another. He is not calling them to behavior, but to a new lifestyle.

In these passages, however, this unity in the church is not guaranteed. Bruce notes that the unity of the Spirit is not the fact that there is one Spirit, for no human can alter that fact, so it must refer to a unity that the Spirit imparts to those who are fellow-members of a body, living in unity.[17] This is the same message that Paul gives to the Colossians when he instructs them, "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful" (Col 3:15). It does not take long for someone to be in or around the Church to understand that while the Spirit has created an environment for unity and oneness, the participants have to act upon this calling. Bruce describes the commitment that a believer must make in order for this to become a reality when he writes that, "an admonition of this kind is more far-reaching than a list of detailed rules; it affects areas of life for which it might be difficult to frame rules."[18]

The basis for this community is the understanding of what was conferred upon one's salvation. Paul writes to the Galatians that, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26-28). Faith in Christ Jesus did not

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[17] Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 334.

[18] Ibid.

alter the diversity in a fellowship, as the Church still was comprised of Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, and males and females. However, cultural, social class, and gender distinctions no longer set the value or worthiness of an individual for participation. Through this faith, the community was put on even footing where everyone could participate with the knowledge that God had seen fit to establish their place in this group. These Christians now belonged to each other in such a way that distinctions that formerly divided them lost significance.[19]

Through Paul's repeated use of "one" in these passages, and others not discussed here, the concept of community is addressed time and again. This community is diverse with variations in culture, social status, and gender. It would have also been diverse across generational boundaries. This was a group that came together to focus not on what made them different, but on what made them the same: faith in Christ Jesus and the Spirit who unified them. Emerging adults add diversity to the Body of Christ, but as believers, a unity has been created by the Spirit that supersedes the differences in culture and age.

An Undetermined Path

The contrast between wisdom and foolishness is a major theme in the book of Proverbs. The book specifically looks at five types of fools, each becoming increasingly more dangerous. The mildest level of foolishness is the one that bears mentioning for

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[19] James Montgomery Boice, "Galatians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelein et al., vol. 10, 409-508 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 468.

this discussion.[20] This fool is the *peti* (Heb. פֶּתִי) and is described as the naïve or a simpleton. This individual's foolishness comes in the form of being open to the instruction of folly rather than wisdom.[21] Frequently, this word characterizes a person who is young, imprudent, and hasty.[22] This person is prone to believing everything. The proper understanding of this word carries a negative sense of being easily enticed or misled.[23] However, this person is not without hope, for as a simpleton, this person needs instruction but is capable of learning.[24]

In order to have a better portrait of this person, it is necessary to see how Proverbs describes this individual. The first thing the author points to is this person's lack of drive exhibited by a satisfaction with self that creates aimlessness (Prv 1:22). He or she sees no need to change, nor has any internal motivation to do so. This person was born naïve and has yet to determine which path of life he or she will take (Prv 7:7). As a result of this naïveté, the simpleton remains gullible. While wisdom is the best protection against this type of gullibility, this person has remained untrained both intellectually and

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[20] M. Saebo, "פֶּתִי," in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, edited by Ernst Jenni and Claus Westerman, translated by Mark E. Biddle, vol. 2, 1037-1039 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1997), 1038.

[21] Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), s.v. פֶּתִי.

[22] Saebo, "פֶּתִי," 1038.

[23] Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon*, s.v. פֶּתִי.

[24] Saebo, "פֶּתִי," 1038.

morally.[25] He or she has never learned to think critically with an ability to consider, analyze, and contemplate different outcomes. Therefore, this person continues to happen upon harmful situations (Prv 14:15, 22:3). While the prudent would be able to see the common pitfalls of life, this simpleton remains vulnerable because he or she has not been equipped to survive in the world.[26]

As mentioned earlier, this person is not without hope. He or she has the capacity to choose the path of wisdom (Prv 9:4). Whereas the prudent person can think critically and arrive at a wise decision, the simpleton may require an external force to offset his or her natural complacency (Prv 21:11). The difference between these people is in how one learns. The prudent can learn from instruction only, but the simpleton also requires an example, and will often learn from watching other fools being punished.[27] However, if these examples go unnoticed, or if they are never implemented in the life of the simpleton, he or she will set a course of complacency and ruin for his or her life. The language used suggests "a permanent, settled condition free from the sense of danger or dread."[28] Both the prudent and the simpleton will eventually come to a point of feeling

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[25] Allen P. Ross, "Proverbs," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelein et al., vol. 5, 883-1134 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 986.

[26] Ibid., 1060.

[27] Ibid., 1053.

[28] Ibid., 911.

settled, but the prudent will arrive there from a genuine security in which the simpleton will arrive there out of carelessness.[29]

This picture presented of the *peti* in Proverbs is not hopeless but it is a time-sensitive issue. This is a young person who stands at a fork in the road and his or her life's path has yet to be determined. Unlike the other four levels of foolishness presented in Proverbs, there is hope for this fool. This hope is based on being trained to think critically, so that he or she can migrate from this foolish label to a prudent label. This is the same situation in which emerging adults find themselves. They have come to the end of their adolescence and must choose a path that will set a course for their lives. As Goldberg has stated, "Apart from godly tutelage, he is on the road to death."[30]

Biblical Theology

Having examined several passages exegetically, the next step is to build a theology for ministry to and with emerging adults by exploring how the Church has historically addressed this issue. Upon completion of this step, some conclusions will be drawn in an attempt to discern how the Church should move forward and develop praxis for ministry. Anderson defines the concept of praxis as "action that took into account the *telos*, or goal and purpose of the act."[31] The task at hand is not only to see how the

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[29] Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, *T*he New American Commentary, Edited by E. Ray Clendenen, Vol. 14 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993), 73.

[30] Louis Goldberg, "פֶּתִי," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, edited by R. Laird Harris, Jr., Gleason L. Archer and Bruce K. Waltke, vol. 2, 742-743 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 743.

[31] Ray S. Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 103.

Scriptures have addressed this subject, but also to ask the question of how the Scriptures would call the Church to respond in light of their treatment of the subject. This is the step that requires the Church to migrate from being just a hearer of the Word to a doer of the Word (Jas 1:23). In Anderson's words, "in biblical theology it is not the *telos* of a historical or human process that constitutes the goal of praxis but the eschaton, or final revelation of God in history through the coming of Christ."[32]

The Church's History in This Area

Both the Old and New Testaments use a wide variety of words in the Hebrew and Greek, respectively, that can be translated into terms like "child" or "youth." With no specific Hebrew or Greek words for adolescence or puberty, biblical authors were forced to be vague in addressing this age range. With no specific vocabulary referencing adolescence in both the Old and New Testaments, the concept of the catechist and the catechumen are particularly helpful for this discussion.

The teacher, known as a catechist, would instruct the student, known as a catechumen, in the elements of his or her own religion.[33] This instruction was required training for the catechumen's baptism. Gerberding explains the origin of the catechist/ catechumen system when he writes, "The words are derived from Gk. *katecheo*, "give a sound," "answer," "echo," as the students echo the words of their instructor. It came to

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[32] Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology*, 103.

[33] G. H. Gerberding, "Catechist; Catechumen," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 1, 622 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 622.

mean familiar verbal instruction, a free informal discussion between teacher and pupil."[34] What began as a system to teach dogma had evolved into a free-flowing education between a student and mentoring instructor.

While there is no organized catechumenate in the New Testament, this system was becoming more entrenched as the preferred method for training the young of the church. By the time of Origen of Alexandria (186-251 A.D.), this training had been codified to the extent that Demetrius, the bishop of Alexandria, gave Origen the task of training the catechumens while Origen was still a teenager.[35] Origen, who became the greatest scholar of the early Church, began his ministry as a catechist training and preparing candidates for baptism.[36]

The system continued to grow and the training became more regimented and organized. This training proved to become even more valuable as opposition grew and persecution against the Church increased. Gerberding explains the intensification of the system when he writes, "The Christians were compelled to set forth and defend their beliefs more clearly. They had to meet and answer keen and persistent objections. And so the necessity for clear, systematic teaching led more and more to an ordered catechumenate."[37]

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[34] Gerberding, "Catechist; Catechumen," 622.

[35] Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. 1, *The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1984), 78.

[36] Bryan M. Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers: An Evangelical Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 143.

[37] Gerberding, "Catechist; Catechumen," 622.

During that same time, the Church encountered growth coming from the Gentile world that had no history with God apart from watching His relationship with Israel. As the third century began, the catechumenate became a fully functioning program that lasted three years and served as a time of preparation, trial, and instruction prior to baptism.[38] This time was designed to instruct the catechumens in Christian doctrine and to allow the catechumens a chance to exhibit signs in their daily lives of the depth of their own personal convictions.[39] The task before the catechumens was arduous and the dedication required by the catechist was great but based on the response, everyone seemed to feel that this was a beneficial investment. The reward for completing this three-year process was not only baptism, but also communion and entry into the Church. The celebration was grand, as Gonzalez describes, "After all the candidates were baptized, the entire congregation went in procession to the meeting place, where the neophytes partook of communion for the first time."[40]

In this celebration, the entire church celebrates with the catechist and the catechumen. This celebration is reminiscent of the celebration that accompanies the return of the lost son in Luke 15. It is easy to understand how this annual event was a highlight of the year for the church, but consider it also from the perspective of the catechumen. This new believer has had a teacher faithfully build into his or her life for three years. They have learned together and the new believer has become grounded in

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[38] Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, 96.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

the faith. Graduation from this program is filled with imagery from Scripture, and this new believer is welcomed into the Body of Christ by celebrating communion with his or her new brothers and sisters in Christ.

As time progressed, the Church reaped the benefits of this commitment to catechize and train the young. Training moved inside individual homes and added another aspect to the program of study. The teaching went beyond examining the depth of one's personal's convictions and also became concerned with character development. John Chrysostom (349-407 A.D.), who served as the bishop of Constantinople, elaborated on elements that he felt should be included in this new area of focusing on one's character. In his work, *On Vainglory and the Upbringing of Children*, he covers topics such as patience, courage, handling adversity, self-discipline, moral purity, leadership, spiritual disciplines, and respect.[41] He exhorted fathers to actively engage the parenting process in a role that is analogous to God's rule in the world, instructing them to be master at all times, "stern and unbending when the rules are broken, but when they are kept, he will be kind and gentle and will give the child plenty of rewards."[42] These homes were to demonstrate love and the high calling of truly training a child. As Chrysostom writes, "We must kiss and embrace him, we must hold him close to us to show him our affection . . . by all these means we must mould him."[43]

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[41] John Chrysostom, "On Vainglory and the Upbringing of Children, 64-90," in *Documents in Early Christian Thought*, edited by Maurice Wiles and Mark Santer, 216-223 (Cambridge: The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1975), 216-223.

[42] Ibid., 217.

[43] Ibid., 220.

This expanded view of catechizing youth caught on and gave rise to a much broader vision of what could be accomplished. The catechists were now concerned with preparing both the mind and the heart of the catechumen. With parents beginning to serve as catechist, which further fragmented the community's role in the raising and training of the children, the impact of this training would increase exponentially. The teacher and the student were truly living life together and the parent became a new model to follow.

As the development and formation of the catechumenate was solidifying, the Church was undergoing enormous changes. Humanism, the elevation of human reason as one's final authority, was taking its toll on the Church. Some theologians became instrumental in bringing about ecclesial reform that led to and included the Protestant Reformation.[44] Seeing the impact of humanism in the lives of the youth led Robert Raikes to begin his first Sunday school class that was aimed at teaching literacy and curbing moral degeneration in youth.[45] This model that Raikes established gained momentum as it launched in Virginia in 1785 and spread throughout the Mississippi Valley.[46] Other organizations with program driven ministries, such as the YMCA and YWCA, began to spring up and assist in stabilizing society as well. These ministries had goals and plans for those who were not in the Church, and they actively engaged the

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[44] Mark W. Cannister, "Youth Ministry's Historical Context: The Education and Evangelism of Young People," in *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically about Youth Ministry*, edited by Kenda Creasy Dean, Chap Clark and Dave Rahn, 77-90 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001), 78.

[45] Ibid., 79.

[46] Ibid.

community in meeting tangible needs. In doing so, thousands of people came to faith and many more were strengthened in their faith.

However, in 1836, a man named Horace Bushnell rejected the prevailing thoughts of his day, which supported revivalism ministries to the lost, and chose to embrace a theology of Christian nurturing.[47] This nurturing heavily favored those in the church over those outside of the church, and it changed Christian education. As a result, parachurch ministries like the Society for Christian Endeavor in 1881, Young Life Campaigns in 1911, The Christian Youth Campaign of America in 1929, Young People's Church of the Air in 1931, Miracle Book Club in 1933, Young Life in 1941, and Youth for Christ in 1944 were all launched to reach the needs of young people who were outside of the Church. These parachurch ministries were the instrumental components in reaching those who were not growing up in the Church. This difference in philosophy, a focus on caring for those being raised in the Church versus a focus on caring for those outside of the Church, was a battle through the twentieth century. As Cannister writes, "While the dichotomy between missions and education, evangelism and discipleship, youth ministry and Christian education is a part of our history, it is a false dichotomy."[48] The two components are essential for every age group in the Church to become all that Christ has called her to be.

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[47] Cannister, "Youth Ministry's Historical Context," 80.

[48] Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP AND THE EMERGING ADULT

Having considered the history of psychosocial development of children, adolescents, and emerging adults, a singular model was presented that compiled the best research understanding the cognitive process of adolescence. With that model as a foundation, the process of individuation was specified as the goal built upon the individual's quest to answer the questions of identity, autonomy, and belonging in the context of both psychosocial and cultural stimuli. Now that social science's research on those three questions has been examined, the focus of this project shifts to how the Church can move forward in light of developmental research. Jesus' continuing mandate to the Church, known as the Great Commission, remains simply to "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Mt 28:19-20). Therefore, the lessons learned from social science will now be integrated with the calling of the Church in an effort to create a thicker understanding of the Church's role in the discipleship of emerging adults.

Understanding the *Mathetes* (Gk. Μαθητὰς)

A careful look at the original text of the Great Commission shows that the main verb is not "go" but "make disciples." The word translated "go" actually appears as a participle and would better be translated "having gone."[1] With this understanding, the focus of the verse shifts from an unspecified "going" to a context of one's daily lifestyle. The main verb in the Greek text is the imperative stated "make disciples." In adding this component to the proper understanding of this calling, the believer is to make disciples as he or she goes through the daily routine of his or her life bringing the "precious tidings" to all whom paths are crossed.[2]

The question now is how believers and the Church should go about the process of making disciples. Jesus states two activities that comprise the task of making disciples: baptizing and teaching. Baptizing points to conversion, so it requires the active role of sharing the Gospel message with unbelievers.[3] Teaching points to the furthering of spiritual maturity in the life of the believer.

The last two questions to consider are: (1) Who is a disciple? and (2) What qualifies someone to be a disciple? According to Wilkins, there were several words used to designate a follower, but *mathetes* was the most common choice.[4] In most colloquial

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[1] William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1973), 999.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 130-131.

[4] M. J. Wilkins, "Disciples," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. by Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 176.

conversations, the English word "disciple" carries the sense of an adherent or student of a great master.[5]

The application of the Great Commission looks somewhat different in every setting, but it often diverges at the philosophical level of a leader or leadership team's understanding of the principles of "go" and "disciple." Douglas Hyde, a former Communist who converted to Catholicism and joined the faculty at Notre Dame, questions why the Church has not been as effective as Communists in gaining adherents in his book, *Dedication and Leadership*.[6] Hyde reports that "it is probably true to say of the Communists that never in man's history has a small group of people set out to win a world and achieve more in less time."[7] As he critiques the differences between Communism and Christianity, he notes that beliefs are important to both groups, but what attracts people to the Communist cause is that they "use well the human material at their disposal . . . most often non-Communists do not."[8] Hyde offers the story of Jim to illustrate his point.[9] As Hyde remembers that first meeting, he describes Jim as "pathetically anxious to be turned into a leader" but that he had never "seen anyone who looked less like a leader in his life." However, Jim gets involved with the movement and does become a leader. Recalling Jim's death, Hyde realized that Jim had defied his first

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[5] Wilkins, "Disciples," 176.

[6] Douglas Arnold Hyde, *Dedication and Leadership: Learning from the Communists* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 9.

[7] Ibid., 11.

[8] Ibid., 13.

[9] Ibid., 62-72.

impressions and this "most unpromising-looking piece of human material that ever came my way had become a leader of men."

In contrast, consider St. Clair's understanding of a disciple. He writes that a particular student looked like a "good candidate for being in a discipleship group" but that he kept putting the student off because he "sensed that deep down he wasn't really committed."[10] Like Hyde, St. Clair encourages the leader to look beyond the externals, but also arrives at the conclusion that "potential disciples need to be F-A-T: Faithful (desiring what God desires), Available (taking time to grow), Teachable (willing to learn)."[11] If St. Clair's model is to be used, the unbelieving or immature disciple does not fit into the structure. Taking it a step further, it seems that the bar is set really high for anyone to consistently reach these standards.

Kanakuk Kamps is based on four main principles, with the first being "I'm Third: God First . . . Others Second . . . I'm Third."[12] In fact, the camp offers an award for the child or adolescent who most consistently demonstrates this ideology in his or her lifestyle. Kanakuk's approach could work well if human experience was as linear as this model implies. However, that is rarely the case in life, and the concept will create tension

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[10] Barry St. Clair, "Building Leaders for Strategic Youth Ministry: Equipping Adults to Lead Students to Spiritual Maturity" www.youth-ministry.info/articles.php5?type=1&cat=50&art_id=20 (accessed June 3, 2009).

[11] Ibid.

[12] "Kanakuk Kamps: Mission," http://www.kanakuk.com/discover/story/mission.aspx (accessed July 3, 2009).

for the adolescent who is attempting to balance personal individuation with serving others.

Campus Crusade for Christ has created several illustrations to address the organization's understanding of spiritual reality: "the natural person," "the spiritual person," and "the carnal person."[13] The elements in each illustration are a "S" identifying self, a cross identifying Jesus, a chair identifying a throne and the ruler, a circle to represent the individual's life, and dots representing life's decisions and actions. For the natural person, "S" is on the throne, the cross is outside the circle, and there is a chaos of dots in varying sizes. For the carnal person, the "S" remains on the throne, with a chaos of dots in varying sizes, but now the cross is inside the circle. Finally, the spiritual person finds the "S" off the throne, the cross on the throne, and all the dots are arranged and small. The problem with this model is that it is rare for all of the dots to line up. This model fails to allow for the fact that there are several times in a given day where the cross and the "S" change places. Most mature believers with the cross on the throne would say their "dots" do not always line up in a pattern.

Another model to be considered is Dietrich Bonhoeffer's, as presented in *The Cost of Discipleship*. Bonhoeffer writes that, "We have forgotten that the cross means rejection and shame as well as suffering."[14] He continues with this thought process when he writes, "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. It may be a death like

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[13] Bill Bright, "Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-Filled Life?" www.ccci.org/growth/spirit-filled-life/index.aspx (accessed June 23, 2009).

[14] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 1st Touchstone ed. (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 89.

that of the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow him, or it may be a death like Luther's, who had to leave the monastery and go out into the world. But it is the same death every time—death in Jesus Christ, the death of the old man at his call."[15]

Bonhoeffer's writings are inspiring because his passion for following Christ is so pervasive. His story is compelling, as he had been allowed to leave his home in Germany prior to World War II, but later returned, feeling the need to be with his fellow Christian countrymen during this horrible time.[16] In a letter to his friend Reinhold Niebuhr, Bonhoeffer explained that he had to return to Germany so that he would have the right to "participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war" by sharing in "the trials of this time with my people."[17] As Bronfenbrenner later discovered in his research, no one is exempt from the influence of his or her culture. Bonhoeffer's passion as a disciple of Jesus Christ led him back into Germany so that he could be a part of a post-Hitler Germany without having to bear the reproach of abandoning the German Church. For Bonhoeffer, discipleship was a line in the sand that did not allow much grace for a struggling disciple.

Much like the composite model of psychosocial development of children, adolescents, and emerging adults, a composite model of discipleship is equally beneficial. Given the inherent struggle and inevitable conflict that exists in a linear model, a model consisting of concentric circles is proposed in an effort to alleviate the tension (see Figure

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[15] Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 89-90.

[16] Ibid., 17.

[17] Ibid., 17-18.

2).[18] In this model, God is in the core of the believer, where He is free to influence both decisions and actions when the believer is not "quenching the Spirit" (1 Thes 5:19). As the believer submits to the Lord's leading, he or she is then able to be a conduit through which God touches all the spheres of the individual's life.

Figure 2. Concentric Circle Model of the Disciple

Rather than seeing discipleship as a methodical program, it is more beneficial to view discipleship through the lens of a relationship where lives are modeled. The Gospel of Mark records the two-fold purpose in Jesus' calling of the disciples when he writes, "Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach" (Mk 3:14). For Christ, the calling of a disciple meant both an association and an education.[19] The priority of the two is demonstrated in that they were to first "be with Him" and then that "He might send them out." These twelve "were brought into the

[18] James Slaughter, "Principles of Discipleship," unpublished class notes for CE770, Dallas Theological Seminary, Fall 1996.

[19] William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Mark*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1975), 123.

closest association possible with the life of the Son of God" so that they could live with, travel with, converse with, and learn from Him.[20] Through this process, Jesus was able to share not only His life with these twelve disciples, but also His vision for living life in an intimate relationship with God.

Emerging Adults Discipled Through Individuation

There will be an internal struggle anytime someone is presented with new information that contradicts existing beliefs. With that understanding, Paul prayed earnestly for the Ephesians to understand the magnitude of God's love for them and His calling on their lives (Eph 1:17-19; 3:14-19). The task of discipling emerging adults through the process of individuation seems to warrant the same approach that Paul took with the Ephesians. In addition to spiritual ignorance and apathy, the Church must also battle her current reputation. In Dan Kimball's popular book, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church*, he provides a wish list this group has for the Church, ranging from wishing for more conversation, to wishing for more respect in a more loving environment.[21]

Though the Church is losing her relevance with this group, she is uniquely equipped to walk with them through the process of discipleship. Dettoni seeks to reclaim the Church's call to this when he writes that the role of the Church is "to facilitate, aid,

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[20] Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: With the New International Version of the Holy Bible*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 642-643.

[21] Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church: Insights from Emerging Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 218-231.

help, teach—in a word, *nurture!*"[22] In order for this to happen, the Church will have to focus on relational connectedness and discard rigid programs and preprogrammed responses to questions. Above all, the Church must herald Christ and His grace as opposed to any standard of self-righteousness for "what in us seems perfection itself corresponds ill to the purity of God."[23] In choosing to promote God and His Word, the target remains fixed, as opposed to attempting to gauge culture's false measure of righteousness, or determine the fluid markers of adulthood. David Wells sought to remind Church leaders that their "fundamental requirement . . . is not a knowledge of where the stream of popular opinion is flowing but a knowledge of where the stream of God's truth lies."[24] Calvin encouraged believers to realign their thinking, saying "suppose we but once begin to raise our thoughts to God, and to ponder His nature, and how completely perfect are His righteousness, wisdom, and power—the straightedge to which we must be shaped."[25] In attempting to follow popular opinion, the Church has lost her unique message of that "straightedge" and there have been drastic consequences. As Smith recently reported, "Religion seems very much a part of the lives of many U.S.

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[22] John M. Dettoni, "What Is Spiritual Formation?" in *The Christian Educator's Handbook on Spiritual Formation*, ed. Kenneth O. Gangel and James C. Whilhoit (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 17.

[23] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: In Two Volumes*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans., Ford Lewis Battles, 2 Volumes, The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 1:38.

[24] David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 215.

[25] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:38.

teenagers but for most of them it is in ways that seem quite unfocused, implicit, in the background, just part of the furniture."[26]

The return to God's truth, with a focus on His righteousness, wisdom, and power, allows the Church to speak to the core questions of individuation that emerging adults are asking. The Scriptures speak to the topics of identity, autonomy, and belonging, yet, many U.S. teens feel that "religion is important but not a priority, valued but not much invested in, praised but not very describable."[27] The fact that this group does not see the priority of faith or have the desire to invest in it is simultaneously an indictment against the Church and a plea for the Church to return to the Great Commission. The Church must "make disciples," baptizing and teaching these emerging adults, one step at a time.

Identity Bestowed

From the very beginning men and women have had inordinate worth and value, evidenced by the words, "So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gn 1:27). This "image" has been the source of great debate for theologians over the centuries. Ross's view seems to best capture the image and what it entails: "It does not signify a physical representation of corporeality, for God is a spirit. The term must therefore figuratively describe human life as a reflection of God's spiritual nature; that is, human life has the communicated

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[26] Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 262.

[27] Ibid.

attributes that came with the inbreathing (Gn 2:7). Consequently, humans have spiritual life, ethical and moral sensitivities, conscience, and the capacity to represent God."[28]

Some theologians have argued that this image was lost after sin entered the garden in Genesis 3. However, the prohibition of murder in Genesis 9:6 is based on humanity's status as an image-bearer. Bray explains the impact of sin on the image when he writes, "The image is immutable, man moved from a state of obedience to disobedience with The Fall. There was no ontological change."[29] Ross's definition is the true identity for every human being. As such, Jesus' teachings indicate the implicit value found in being an image-bearer (cf. Mt 6:26; 12:12).[30] Turner concludes his study of the "image of God" with the idea that the believer's ultimate future with God "ought to provide strong encouragement to Christians who presently reflect God's likeness in an imperfect yet improving manner."[31]

For the emerging adult, as with everyone else, the framework for defining one's identity begins with being formed in the image of God, for it ascribes tremendous worth and value. No one is here "by chance" and no one needs to "prove their worth," for worth is part of his or her very constitution. Beyond the gift of being an image-bearer, there are the additional promises that accompany the new covenant for the believer (Jer

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[28] Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 112.

[29] Gerald Bray, "The Significance of God's Image in Man," *Tyndale Bulletin* 42 (November 1991): 224.

[30] David L. Turner, "Image of God," *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 366.

[31] Ibid., 367.

31:33-34). Regardless of the emerging adult's family of origin, as a believer, this person is now a true child of God (Jn 1:12). Paul explains that the process of adoption into God's family was costly, but God valued people enough for Christ to die for His enemies (Rom 5:8). Through Christ's accomplishment, the believer becomes reconciled to God, is declared righteous and holy, can see that he or she is chosen by God, and is dearly loved (2 Cor 5:18-19; Eph 4:24; Col 3:12).

The image is a vital component of every human's identity, although many people do not understand it. It answers the core questions of value and worth. The new covenant builds upon that foundation and allows for the believer to experience the depth of God's love and be released from the penalty of his or her sin. However, for these truths to be appropriated in the emerging adult's life, it is necessary for a fellow image-bearer to reflect God's love and be willing to walk with an individual through the circles of discipleship. Identity has already been bestowed for every person, so this process merely reveals what God has already knit together (Ps 139).

Autonomy Embraced

Paul explains that the believer has died with Christ, and in doing so, has died to the power of sin (Rom 6:1-6). Prior to life as a believer, life is characterized by an unrighteousness that is incapable of pleasing God (Rom 8:8). However, the believer has been freed from the dominating power of sin so that "it is not something hoped for or

resolved upon by the believer; it is something that has already taken place."[32] It is on this basis that "living a life pleasing to God flows from the experience of liberation from sin's domain secured by God for us in Christ."[33]

As a believer, the power has shifted from the power of sin to to the power of Christ and His resurrection (Phil 3:10). This new power has created the opportunity for the believer to live a life that is pleasing to God. Jesus called His followers to be the salt in a bland world and a light in a world of darkness (Mt 5:13-14). As a believer, the emerging adult has the chance to be influential in a world that lacks flavor and is in need of direction. He or she has been chosen by Christ to bear fruit (Jn 15:16). This fruit, explains Bruce, is "the enduring fruit of lives in union with the ever-living Christ, bearing witness to His abiding grace."[34] Furthermore, this empowered believer has been created by God to do good works and make a difference in the world (Eph 2:10).

For the emerging adult struggling in the quest for autonomy, the opportunity to serve Christ and make a difference is life-changing. This individual can discover that he or she can accomplish things of eternal value. A relationship with God provides a calling and a sense of urgency to have an impact on the world. Emerging adults long to make a difference in their world, and the call of the believer is the same. Through the

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[32] Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: With the New International Version of the Holy Bible*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 68.

[33] Douglas J. Moo, *Romans 1-8*, ed. Kenneth Barker, The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 375.

[34] F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 312.

empowering of the Holy Spirit, any believer can make a difference and achieve great things for God. This group needs mature believers to walk with them through the Scriptures to help them learn about biblical figures who made a difference through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and to serve as a living example of the Spirit-filled life. They can then envision how God longs to utilize their uniqueness to further His work.

Belonging Established

Understanding one's identity and embracing one's autonomy helps the emerging adult find a place to belong. Paul uses the metaphor of a physical body to describe the Church, who is collectively known as the body of Christ. All believers, mature and immature, are a part of the Church. Paul addresses the value of every component of the body when he writes, "From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (Eph 4:16). There are no expendable parts to the body because a healthy body needs all systems functioning together towards one goal (1 Cor 12:21). In Bruce's words, "Each one functions best in union with Him and with the others."[35] The interdependency of the body of Christ is a healthy dynamic that allow everyone to be a unique person.

Because these believers have been bought for a price and belong to God, they have been made into a chosen race, a royal priesthood, and a member of a holy nation (1

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[35] F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 353.

Cor 6:19-20; 1 Pt 2:9-10). This level of interdependence and unity is so rare that it calls attention to itself. According to John 17, the body of Christ's ability to maintain a unity of purpose draws others to Christ (Jn 17:20-23).

In their quest for belonging, emerging adults long for a unity that is exemplified in the Church. Every person in the Church stands on equal footing, for the only boast of anyone is the grace of God (Eph 2:8-9). No one is expendable and everyone serves a unique function toward the common goal of the whole. However, emerging adults need to be invited to join the process by mature believers. They may look and think differently than those currently involved in Church, but that actually shows their need for integration, not separation. The call to discipleship requires the Church to pursue emerging adults, adopting them into the overall body. These new Church members then have the ability to further the health of the Church by establishing a pattern of discipleship that will carry on to future generations.

PART THREE

BUILDING A STRATEGY

CHAPTER 6

A TEMPLATE FOR THEOLOGICAL DISCERNMENT

Any ministry that is worth offering in the Church requires evaluation to ensure that the effort is being invested well. As such, the current ministry with emerging adults in Grace Church will be evaluated to identify both the strengths and the weaknesses. Rather than using a particular model as a means of assessment, various components that must be considered for any effective ministry will be utilized to determine these strengths and weaknesses.

A small group of third-year doctoral students at Fuller Theological Seminary offered a template consisting of five essential components that could be used to accurately assess the effectiveness of any ministry.[1] This particular template, which will from this point forward be referred to as the Pentagon, will allow for a visual representation of each of the strength/weakness areas to be mapped on a grid relative to

[1] This model was created as part of the requirements for the Youth, Family, and Culture Cohort (YF725/726). The group consisted of Kelly Lashly, Nick Kross, Kris Fernhout, and myself. However, this model has undergone several revisions through cohort interaction and then further interaction between Chris Pollock, Paul Walker, and myself.

the other four components (see Figure 3). Each component of the Pentagon will be scored 1 (low) to 5 (high), with that number being the average score of the questions that are used to determine the effectiveness within the particular component. For example, the component labeled "Clarity and Intentionality of Purpose" uses three questions to arrive at the component score. Each of those three questions will be scored from 1 to 5, and then those three numbers will be averaged together to yield an overall component score.

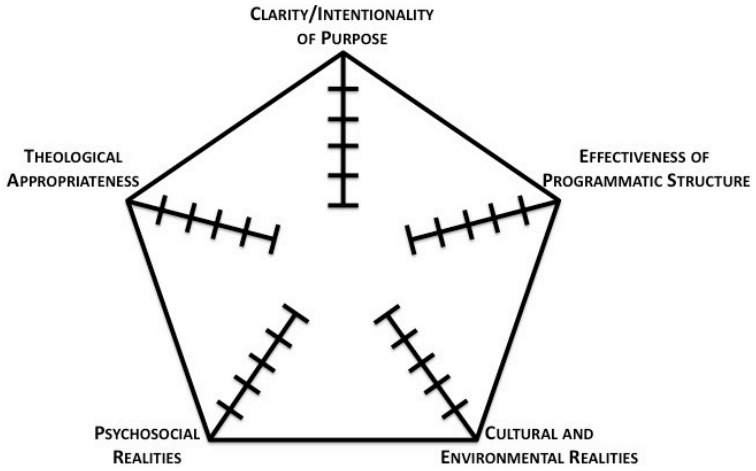

Figure 3. The Pentagon

The five components that were determined to be essential in assessing an effective ministry were (1) Clarity and Intentionality of Purpose, (2) Theological Appropriateness, (3) Psychosocial Realities, (4) Cultural and Environmental Realities, and (5) Effectiveness of Programmatic Structure. While the Pentagon does not necessarily show

the priority of components, it was designed to ask questions that would build in a counter-clockwise direction. The intent was to begin with the ministry's ability to state and embody its target. Next, the theological appropriateness of the target would be evaluated. With that understanding, the target would be examined against the backdrop of the developmental and cultural realities. Finally, the evaluation would close with an examination of whether the implemented program took all of these other factors into account.

In examining Grace Church's ministry with emerging adults, it must be noted that this age group of 18- to roughly 25-year-olds encompasses two different ministries: the college ministry (LateNight) and the young adults ministry (Transitions). Grace's college ministry consists of MSU students, a local junior college's students, and enlisted airmen.[2] The Transitions ministry includes a mix of both singles and marrieds that range from roughly 23- to 35-year-olds. This group earned its name from the rapid succession of transitions they endure, including being on their own, beginning careers, getting married, and becoming parents. In order to assess the effectiveness of the emerging adult ministry of Grace Church, the Pentagon will be applied to both LateNight and Transitions.

Clarity and Intentionality of Purpose

It would be hard to overstate the importance of a worthwhile ministry having a clear focus on who they are and what God has raised them up to accomplish. Malphurs

[2] "Airman/Airmen" is not to be understood as a designation of gender. The United States Air Force (USAF) uses these terms in a way that is similar to the non-specific word "sailor" and refers to the lowest ranking members of the USAF.

writes, "In times of vast, uncertain change, people who are serious about serving their Savior are looking for direction, not only in their lives but also in the churches in which they worship."[3] There is really no limit to needs and, consequently, no limit to the demands that can be placed on a ministry to meet those needs. However, every ministry must clarify what need or needs they will seek to accomplish, as no one ministry can meet every need. A ministry that does not clarify a specific focus will flounder and be unable to have any deep impact because they are spread so thin. Furthermore, if an organization's stated purpose is both clear and intentional, then it will serve the organization in answering questions. Malphurs describes the impact of a floundering leadership on a congregation when he writes, "Today, more than in the past, [the people in our churches] want to know where their leaders, especially pastors are taking them. They're tired of pastors who are directionless and boards that are wandering around in ministry circles like Moses and the Israelites in the wilderness. If they feel that their leaders are wasting their time, they'll go elsewhere."[4]

The founders of Grace Church established the church with the singular goal to teach the Scriptures. That aim, in conjunction with a desire to avoid legalistic or artificial measurements of spiritual maturity, are still the hallmarks of Grace. As a result, Grace does not have formal membership, pass offering plates, distribute personal giving envelopes, or resort to any techniques that inherently apply pressure. Those things have

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[3] Aubrey Malphurs, *Being Leaders: The Nature of Authentic Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 59.

[4] Ibid., 59-60.

served the church well and have allowed the church to serve as an oasis for many people through the years. Grace has relished that role of providing a place of healing where a person can remain anonymous until the individual is ready to initiate. The downside to that has been that too many people have remained anonymous. Consequently, Grace has had a great number of attendees who remain unconnected from the Body of Christ even though they may attend several Sundays a month.

Presently, while the church has remained true to teaching the Scriptures, it has morphed into the context of teaching the Scriptures with a trajectory of people's lives. While that may not seem like much of a shift, Grace's teaching is now centered relationally in the lives of people and in an atmosphere of grace. What has changed from time to time in the life of Grace is the vision for how the mission can best be accomplished. Currently, the vision statement reads that "Grace Church will become a family of believers that fosters a sense of belonging." This particular shift states the leadership's current intentional focus on building a connected community.

While some ministries may choose to have their own purpose statements that are contextualized to their specific target audience, the purpose statements for LateNight and Transitions are the same as the overall church's, which is to seek to raise up mature disciples of Jesus Christ. The methodology is also the same as the church's: these ministries want to become a family of believers who foster a sense of belonging for everyone who attends Grace Church.

To What Extent Does the Leadership Articulate Their Purpose

The leadership structure looks different in each of these two ministries. LateNight has a leadership team that is comprised of both singles and marrieds ranging from age twenty-four to fifty. These leaders attend the weekly large group gathering, are involved in the College Bible Fellowship (CBF) on Sunday mornings, and are involved with the students socially throughout the week. The Transitions ministry has no formalized leadership team apart from the overall church's leadership structure. I am the weekly Adult Bible Fellowship (ABF) teacher for this group on Sunday mornings. There are also three small fellowship groups for Transitions. These small groups are in-home gatherings that use the model of Acts 2:42 in study, prayer, breaking bread, and fellowship. Outside of these age-graded options for the two ministries, every participant in either ministry is encouraged to take part in the church-wide opportunities offered through the men's ministry, women's ministry, and adult mission opportunities.

The LateNight leadership team has a solid grasp on its purpose. In fact, the purpose is defined well enough that it does actually answer important questions for the ministry. There are several college ministries in the city that run their program differently than Grace's. Grace's narrow focus does limit the size of the group, but Grace has never sought to merely attract large numbers. Rather, Grace seeks to shepherd those people who choose to attend. LateNight has the reputation of being a study where a college student can come to learn the Bible. Cormode has written, "The first duty of a Christian leader is to provide a Christian perspective, an interpretative framework for people who

want to live faithful lives."[5] Grace's heartbeat is in raising up mature disciples of Jesus Christ. Whether in words or actions, the LateNight leadership seems to be effective in articulating this purpose.

Without a team structured to work specifically with the Transitions ministry, this evaluation, along with the other four components of the Pentagon, will assess the church's leadership team comprised of the elders and pastoral staff. With that said, the overall leadership team of Grace excels in this area. Grace does a solid job of recognizing that discipleship is not a program that can be implemented; rather, it is a process of walking with people through the ups and downs of life. Furthermore, this process is rarely the same for any two people, so the very process through which discipleship is accomplished is building a bridge towards the achievement of "fostering a sense of belonging."

The overall leadership of Grace strives for intentionality in all areas of ministry. In most cases, that means that every program in the church is open to being reevaluated. There is an extremely positive side to this style of leadership, as the church does not have to maintain programs that have ceased to be effective. The church is free to eliminate ministries that have become irrelevant and begin new ministries that help the church in becoming more effective in the process of raising up mature disciples. For example, while Grace will continue to hold firmly to the conviction that God raised her up to teach the Scriptures, the way to best carry out that mission may change. Some people on the

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[5] Scott Cormode, *Making Spiritual Sense: Christian Leaders as Spiritual Interpreters* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), xi.

leadership team are beginning to ask the question of whether the word "disciple" is the best choice of words, as the word could have some negative connotations, whereas another word might better serve Grace's purposes.

Reggie Joiner, founder of The reThink Group, was a plenary speaker at the 2009 National Youth Workers's Convention in Atlanta.[6] In his session, Joiner used Apple Inc. as a example of change.[7] As he chronicled the recent history of Apple, he stressed the idea that "you can't build something that will last unless you're willing to change what you build." With that premise, Joiner led the attendees through the progression of determining the difference between what he defines as core and what is cultural.[8] Because this session was offered on DVD, the entire pastoral staff of Grace was able to process the ministries of the church regarding these two labels. In addition, every elder at the church was able to watch this same session and use Joiner's analysis as the catalyst for interaction regarding what needs to change if Grace is going to last. Because of the openness of the leadership of Grace to consider conversations like these, the Transitions leadership team earns a 4 on the Pentagon for being able to articulate its purpose. The LateNight team is committed to raising up mature disciples, but does not always

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[6] "Orange - Orange History: An Almost Accurate History of Orange," http://ww.whatisorange.org/orange-history/ (accessed May 31, 2010).

[7] Reggie Joiner, "Big Room 6," Seminar, The National Youth Workers Convention - Atlanta, 22 November 2009.

[8] According to Joiner, the things that are core to an institution "never, never change" and remain "timeless." However, he declares that the things that are cultural "should change and should change frequently" because that are, by nature, "temporary."

articulate it as well as the overall leadership of Grace, thereby earning a 3.5 on the Pentagon.

To What Extent Can the People Understand and Articulate the Purpose

The answer to this question seems to be inextricably linked to the former question. If the leadership is effective, and they are articulating the purpose of the ministry, then the logical conclusion would be that the people in that ministry would understand and be able to articulate the ministry's purpose. Even so, this question bears a response, as it is an important consideration. Dr. Howard Hendricks used to tell all of his seminary classes that "If you want the people to bleed for something, you [as the leader] are going to have to hemorrhage for it."[9]

The LateNight ministry is known for being a ministry that teaches the Scriptures. While the students would not be familiar with the Hendricks quote, the leadership hemorrhages for raising up mature disciples and the students bleed for it. The ministry does not employ many "club-like" components such as walk-on characters, skits, or games. The large group meeting consists of some mixers, worship, and a teaching time. If there is any confusion about the ministry's purpose, it would probably be that LateNight is just a teaching ministry. However, the strong focus on application and grace would seem to negate that possibility. For example, Grace offers free childcare for every ministry offering in the church. LateNight has never offered childcare though because it has never been necessary, but that is about to change. When LateNight ended in the

[9] This quote was so common in Dr. Hendricks teaching ministry that virtually every student who had him heard him say it in some capacity even though there is no specific citation.

spring, there were two pregnant students in regular attendance, as well as two college students who were already mothers. The fact that these females actively participate in the ministry lends credibility to the fact that LateNight is more than just a "teaching point."

The Transitions ministry would respond similarly to this question. Again, the only confusion this group might have would be the belief that the ministry is here to just teach the Scriptures without any concern for the individuals in the ministry. However, the group is experiencing a level of community that would rule out that possibility. The opportunities offered to this group and the LateNight group, are almost all relationally based. There is an in-depth, intense Bible study that is offered for those who want to study the Scriptures at a deeper level, but that is the exception at Grace currently. More and more of the studies offered have intentional times built into the programs for connection and the opportunity to apply scriptural truths to each person's life.

On the basis of this question, the LateNight ministry receives a 3. Two points are deducted due to the fact that the ministry has not been more intentional in communicating the desire to create a sense of belonging in the overall church. The Transitions ministry rates higher with a 3.5. This group has a much deeper sense of belonging to a family-like atmosphere. However, a point is deducted due to the fact that the desire to raise up mature disciples is sometimes missed. While "real needs" are important, this group responds so strongly to "felt needs" that the connection is what draws them into the group.

To What Extent Do the People Embody and Live Out the Purpose

Both Paul and James warn about the danger of the pursuit of knowledge apart from the application of knowledge that leads to action (cf. 1 Cor 8; Jas 1); this danger applies here. If the ministry has a clear and intentional purpose that is being articulated by the leadership and understood by the people, one would expect it to alter the way the people in the ministry live. At this point, only the people's embodying of the communicated purpose will be evaluated. The validity of that purpose will be evaluated in the next component of the Pentagon.

The LateNight ministry has an interesting dynamic as it pertains to embodying the ministry's purpose. There are a great number of students who are maturing in their walks with the Lord. In fact, using Paul's and James' admonitions mentioned above, most of these students are living out their faith as they actively serve in both church and parachurch ministries. However, while this group is doing well in embodying the call to discipleship, it is lacking in the sense of belonging in the church family. There are several elements that have led to this. First, with so many of the students serving in other ministries (either at Grace or in another church), their participation in other offerings through the LateNight ministry is impeded. Second, many of the people in this ministry are not attracted to Grace's worship service and have found their way into other churches. Because of that, many students in the LateNight ministry only participate in the large group weekly study and are connected in the church they attend on Sunday mornings.

The Transitions ministry is a group that has made tremendous strides in the last two years in both their pursuit of discipleship and in regards to functioning like a family. Because of Sheppard Air Force Base, this group has traditionally had a number of young adults who are fresh out of college and newly married. Knowing that most assignments for them will be three years, they tend to get connected more quickly than the civilian couples. In many ways, these USAF couples are setting the pace for the entire Transitions ministry to connect. This family-like belonging is clearly evident is the way this group is responding to each other in the midst of life's crises. In the last two months, one member was shot at a local coffee shop in a random act of violence, a mother of newborn twins began suffering from deep postpartum depression, and another couple had a child born with severe respiratory distress who was care-flighted two hours away to a children's hospital. As a member of the leadership team, it has been an incredible opportunity to watch this group take on one another's burdens and lighten each others' loads in tangible ways.

On the basis of this question, the LateNight ministry receives a 3 on the Pentagon. This ministry is doing a solid job in raising up mature disciples. In fact, this ministry has served and is serving as a great resource to both Grace's children's ministry and youth ministries. However, the lack of connectedness to the overall body at Grace is a glaring weakness. The Transitions ministry receives a 3.5 on the Pentagon. If this question had been posed a year ago, it would have scored lower, but now this group is currently growing in their connectedness in a healthy way. However, while the need for

relationships is being met, the desire for discipleship could be questioned. The real positive is that the strong relational bonds are driving this group to a deeper discipleship.

Theological Appropriateness

Having examined the leadership's ability to clearly articulate the purpose of the ministry, the focus now shifts to the theological appropriateness of the stated purpose. This component will examine if the purpose is aligned with biblical exegesis and biblical theology. It will then process if it is ground in a biblical antecedent and considers a kingdom trajectory.

While some may debate whether the Scriptures are relevant for today, Kara Powell accurately asserts that, "If our job is to 'bring the Bible to life,' that implies the Bible is somehow already (at least partly) dead. That's poor theology, if not heresy! The Bible is alive; we don't have to make it so. Our job is to present its historical and cultural contexts so that its inherent life shines forth to our students."[10] In fact, Powell raises the bar on the imperatival nature of teaching the Scriptures when she writes, "Since students will rarely grow more deeply than the depth of our teaching, it's time we stop playing Marco Polo and splashing around in the shallow end."[11] Using those words as a guideline, the validity of what is being taught must be examined. The way Scripture was taught forty years may no longer be effective. Highlighting the shift in the current

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[10] Kara Powell quoted in Tony Jones, *Postmodern Youth Ministry: Exploring Cultural Shift, Creating Holistic Connections, Cultivating Authentic Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Youth Specialties, 2001), 206.

[11] Jones, *Postmodern Youth Ministry,* 187.

culture, Jones offers a contrast to Josh McDowell's *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* when he writes, "if we think the evidence demands a verdict, it's only because we are standing within the Christian tradition. To a student outside the Christian tradition there may seem to be very little evidence, and it doesn't demand any kind of verdict."[12]

To What Extent Is It Aligned with Biblical Exegesis

The mission of Grace is clearly in alignment with the Scriptures as it is derived from the very last words that Christ left with His disciples (Mt 28:18-20). Furthermore, both the LateNight and Transitions ministries are committed to the disciple-making process that is described in Chapter 5 of this paper. Therefore, the bulk of analysis in this section will be based on Grace's vision statement as she strives to become a family of believers that fosters a sense of belonging.

While the LateNight ministry's purpose is not being clearly articulated, it is aligned with biblical exegesis. The participants in this ministry are treated as full members in God's household. There is an invitation into the overall community of Grace, and more specifically into the lives of the leadership team. The students are able to experience both sides of *koinonia*, in that they have rights to make deposits and withdrawals from the group. Because of the leadership team in this ministry, these students also have the opportunity to solidify the paths on which they are walking. Every semester a different leader or leader couple shares his or her story. These testimonies

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[12] Jones, *Postmodern Youth Ministry,* 13. The two-volume series to which Jones is referring is Josh McDowell, *Evidence* That Demands a Verdict: Historical Evidences for the Christian Faith, 2 Volumes (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ International, 1972).

have been frank and transparent, and they build bridges into the students' lives. All of these things are creating an environment to train and equip these students for life.

The Transitions ministry functions in much the same way as LateNight when it comes to biblical exegesis. As previously stated, this group is experiencing a deep connectedness in God's household. Due to this time of great change, this group recognizes their need for people to come alongside them and lend a hand. They are also taking steps to direct their own spiritual growth. One group of men from this ministry has created their own small group that is faithfully pursuing God's call on their lives.

Both of these ministries score high in their alignment with biblical exegesis. The LateNight ministry scores a 4.5 for its commitment to equip these fully functional members in the body of Christ. The Transitions ministry also scores a 4.5 for its strong sense of *koinonia*.

To What Extent Is It Aligned with Biblical Theology

In order to assess the ministry's alignment with biblical theology, two components must be considered. This step includes an understanding of both the exegesis of relevant passages and the church's interpretation of those passages throughout church history. With that in mind, this question really revolves around the community's commitment to connect and train the next generation.

Both the LateNight and Transitions ministry have a balance between opportunities to connect with the broader church and among those in their own life stage.

Unfortunately, these two groups frequently keep to themselves, so the overall community is stunted. May states, "The Christian formation of children is fostered through a variety of relationships. Children need to know and be known by adults who care about them, invest in them, and give them opportunities to see adults living as Christians."[13] While the authors of this resource are speaking more specifically about younger children, the premise holds true for this older group as well. This is especially true when one considers the home life many of these emerging adults experienced. The authors continue, "Given the many single-parent families in our milieu, the church can give children the gift of meaningful relationships with adults who in a small way fill the void left by the mother or father who is absent from their home."[14]

While Grace offers many opportunities to connect inter-generationally, the sad truth is that it does not happen as regularly as it should.[15] Grace would benefit greatly by adding more opportunities that offer the benefits of a catechism. This type of program would ensure that the lessons of God's faithfulness would continue to be passed on to subsequent generations. May and team write, "It becomes the responsibility of family and community to pass on to their children the story of God's creating, redeeming, and sustaining grace and power (cf. Dt 4:9, 6:4-9,11:19; Prv 22:6; Eph 6:4)."[16] This

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[13] Scottie May et al., *Children Matter: Celebrating Their Place in the Church, Family, and Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 144.

[14] Ibid.

[15] The only ministries in Grace that are divided into life stages are the Adult Bible Fellowships and each level of student ministry.

[16] May et al., *Children Matter,* 88.

commitment to pass on these types of stories provides a stable foundation for this age group's spirituality. Smith explains, "a factor . . . associated with stronger emerging adult religion is the teenager having more adults in a religious congregation to whom he or she can turn for support, advice, and help."[17] Even if that was not this group's experience as a mid-adolescent, the church still has a vital role to play in this area. Both the LateNight and Transitions ministries receive lower scores in regard to the question regarding connection because while the opportunities are offered, the type of mentoring addressed above is rare. Both of these ministries would benefit from older generations seeking them out and inviting them into this type of relationship. The Men's Fraternity ministry has done a good job of connecting the men in Transitions with older men, but that would be the exception. For this reason, LateNight receives a 3 in this area and Transitions receives a 3.5.

To What Extent Is It Grounded in a Biblical Antecedent

Another aspect worthy of discussion is whether the stated purposes for a ministry have a biblical antecedent. In the case of Grace, the very vision of the church is for the church to increase in the sense of belonging as the church becomes a family-like community of believers. There is ample support in the Scriptures for this type of community that supports the younger generation. For example,

> As the Israelites prepared to enter the Promised Land and become a nation of God's chosen people, Moses challenged them to live in obedience to God's laws

[17] Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 223.

> for their good and for the sake of their children (Dt 6:1-25). God intended that the life of a God-honoring community and nation would nurture the faith of children… They knew who they were in that community through its stories and the reenactment of them. Throughout the Old Testament we see the crucial influence of the faith community in the spiritual nurture of children (cf. Jo 8:30-35; 2 Chr 20; Neh 12: 27-43).[18]

The leadership of Grace has recognized that this type of fellowship and interaction was not happening apart from an intentional plan. With that in mind, every ministry in the church is working towards intensifying their efforts to make this a reality. This is already beginning to take shape. The summer program at Grace this summer will look radically different as a result in this shift of thinking. For example, the children's ministry VBS program has been moved from mornings to evenings so families can be involved. In fact, parents sign up their entire families at registration as opposed to signing up only their children.

Both LateNight and Transitions are beginning to reap the benefit of this shift. As two ministries in Grace who have the same ministry purpose as the overall church, both score high in the area of biblical antecedent. Due to this recent change in the vision statement of Grace, both LateNight and Transitions earn a 4.5.

To What Extent Does It Consider a Kingdom Trajectory

One last factor that must be taken into account in evaluating the theological appropriateness of a ministry is whether it is capable of accommodating a kingdom trajectory. Given that the post-fall state in which the church exists has been marred by

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[18] May et al., *Children Matter*, 130-132.

sin, the kingdom trajectory takes into account both creation in a pre-fall state and in the eternal state. For the purposes of this question, the idea is to consider whether or not the ministry purpose is guided with an eternal view.

In considering this question, there is only one point that bears mentioning in considering the mission and vision of the LateNight and Transitions ministries. The throne room of God presented in Revelation 5 shows the body of Christ united in their worship of Christ. This worship is multigenerational and multicultural. This scene is the ultimate fulfillment of Jesus' prayer in John 17 in which He prays for the church to experience the kind of unity that He experiences with the Father and to be unified with the Trinity (Jn 17:20-23).

As in the case of evaluating the biblical antecedent question, both LateNight and Transitions score high on this question. Both ministries, committed to the overall purposes of Grace, seek to move emerging adults into a community of believers that will create a sense of belonging in a family-like setting. Since emerging adults have become so disenfranchised with the church, the appeal of the church will not be dogma; rather, it will be the interconnectedness that is missing from their lives. Therefore, on the basis of the leadership's commitment to fostering a sense of belonging, both the LateNight and Transitions ministries earn a 4 on this question.

Psychosocial Realities

The next component of the Pentagon for discussion is the extent to which the ministry's purpose is informed by psychosocial realities. This is crucial because a ministry may have a very clear-cut purpose with a solid theological foundation; however, if that ministry is ignorant of the environment in which its people live, it will never succeed. In order to correctly assess and evaluate the ministry's purpose in light of these realities, both the emerging adult's psychosocial development and the familial circumstances and history must be considered.

As described in the Introduction and Part One of this project, these emerging adults have been victimized by the systemic abandonment of this culture and must live with the ongoing consequences of that abandonment. For example, this generation is struggling to cope with the difficulties of life, often due to the absenteeism of parents or the over-involvement of parents (a more subtle form of abandonment). Twenge explains that the over-involved parents "find themselves protecting their offspring from either challenge or disappointment."[19] This generation is facing a more complex world with fewer resources to succeed, as they often have not learned how to deal with the challenges and disappointments of life. Furthermore, this group lives in isolation. Smith describes this when he writes that the majority view in emerging adults is "nobody has any natural or general responsibility or obligation to help other people."[20] This ideology

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[19] Jean M. Twenge, *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled--and More Miserable Than Ever Before* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 6.

[20] Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 48.

has created an entire generation that functions independently of others with no concern for the common good. Yet, this group longs to connect with each other even though they have no idea how to do it. Twenge writes that this generation has been "malnourished from eating a junk-food diet of instant messages, email and phone calls rather than the healthy food of live, in-person interaction."[21]

To What Extent Does It Consider Psychosocial Development

In order for any ministry to be effective, it must consider the target audience. One important factor that must be taken into account is the target audience's psychosocial development and the things that have either contributed to or hindered its growth. This is one area in which the lack of social capital will be clearly evident. The absence of other committed adults assisting these emerging adult across the tightrope of adolescent is really taking its toll on this group. As this generation transitions into adulthood and answers the questions of identity, autonomy, and belonging, their stress has reached extreme levels, manifesting itself in depression, self-injury, and reckless behaviors. Adding to all of this is the fact that this group is attempting to hit the "moving target" of what it means to be an adult.

The LateNight ministry at Grace has undergone a major improvement in this area in the last four years. Through additional reading, conferences, seminars, and continuing education, the leadership team now has a better grasp of the processes involved in transition into adulthood, as well as the dangers associated with that transition. The

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[21] Twenge, *Generation Me*, 110.

ministry's growth in this area would seem to be exemplified as the leaders are having more and more opportunities to help counsel the students through this process. Therefore, the LateNight ministry scores a 4 in this area.

The Transitions ministry has also benefitted from the additional training. That training has served as the foundation for many discussions to help this group process where they are in their own personal development. In fact, a small group of men have decided to dedicate part of their study to the questions of identity, autonomy, and belonging, as it pertains to them, their wives, and their parenting. Therefore, the Transitions ministry has also deepened its connection through a deeper understanding of these issues, giving this ministry as solid 4.

To What Extent Does It Consider Familial Circumstances and History

Levine writes, in *The Price of Privilege*, that "parents pressure their children to be outstanding, while neglecting the very process by which outstanding children are formed."[22] In order for a ministry to be effective with emerging adults, the ministry must be cognizant of this reality. This generation may have had more resources than any other generation in history, but it has not been grounded in some of the things that matter most.

In evaluating the LateNight and Transitions ministries in this area, it is important to note that Grace does an inordinate amount of counseling. In this counseling context, many of the issues that Levine specifies as leading to psychological problems are

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[22] Madeline Levine, *The Price of Privilege: How Parental Pressure and Material Advantage Are Creating a Generation of Disconnected and Unhappy Kids*, 1st Harper pbk. ed. (New York: Harper, 2008), 65.

addressed, confronted, and processed. For example, every wedding that a member of Grace's pastoral staff officiates requires the couple to have at least six counseling sessions that cover areas of communication, conflict resolution, children and parenting, finances, leisure time, and family of origin issues. Outside of premarital counseling, many of those same issues are addressed as these emerging adults find themselves in new situations where they feel adrift. They may or may not be able to identify exactly what is going on, but they are quite aware that life is not working out the way they had hoped.

Whatever the reason, there are a great number of emerging adults who are seeking help as they transition through the vast number of changes going on around them. One step that is extremely encouraging is watching this group beginning to assist each other in these areas. As the vision of Grace becomes more of a reality, and this group is able to enjoy the fruits of this "family" and a sense of belonging, they are able to minister to each other more effectively. This type of ministry upholds Grace's understanding of Ephesians 4 and the way that the entire Body of Christ is to function in relation to each other. Therefore, both the LateNight and Transitions ministry score a 3.5 in this area. While the pastoral leadership has traditionally done well in this area, the fact that the church's vision is moving the church forward in this way calls for an increased score.

Cultural and Environmental Realities

The fourth component of the Pentagon to be examined is the ministry's sensitivities to the environmental context of the target audience. For example, Smith

claims that "American culture has little to pass on to American youth with which they can navigate life beyond their experiences of their own subjective desires and feelings – on which alone it is not possible to build good lives."[23] If that is true, then any ministry that is targeted to this age group must be aware of the difficulties in teaching objective truths. One area where this dilemma has gained national media coverage is in the area of business ethics. Twenge explains, "Business scandals like those at WorldCom and Enron demonstrate that many people have little problem with breaking the rules and telling lies in an attempt to make more money."[24] While the current culture has seemingly assumed a relative morality, those business scandals seemed to have awakened an inherent sense of injustice because of the way they affected the common man.

Another environmental concern for any ministry to emerging adults is the breakdown of the home. That breakdown may or may not include divorce, but the reality is that "parenting is much more a voluntary choice than it was two generations ago . . . [and] remaining married is also much more a voluntary choice."[25] Sadly, as Garland points out, "Family living teaches experientially the meaning of grace and love, anger and sin, forgiveness and reconciliation and covenant," and this departure from family-living is depriving this generation from those invaluable lessons.[26]

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[23] Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 299.

[24] Twenge, *Generation Me,* 27.

[25] Diana S. Richmond Garland, *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 29.

[26] Ibid., 15.

Beyond those contextual variables, this generation is inundated with technology to a negative degree. Smith points out that while emerging adults are enamored with the gadgets that keep them connected to teach other, "managing personal relationships turns out for many to be not a distinct task reserved for routinely scheduled times of the day or week, but rather a ubiquitous, 24/7 life activity."[27] This level of interaction has created a new problem known as "continuous partial attention," in which this age group struggles to maintain focus for sustained periods of times as they check "email, stock quotes, and Facebook."[28]

The Church is not secondary to these cultural realities, but she must minister with the understanding of the influence and power of these realities. Jones explains this when he writes that the Church is "called to be in a kind of dance with culture - a dance in which we [the Church] lead and culture follows."[29]

To What Extent Does It Consider the Metanarrative

The current metanarrative of our culture speaks of a rugged individualism that isolates the individual. As Smith explains, "American individualism leaves its youth to themselves, thrown back on their own devices, often lacking the cognitive and emotional tools and concerned conversation partners needed to intelligently sort out life's big issues,

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[27] Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition,* 74.

[28] Mark Bauerlein, "Why Gen-Y Johnny Can't Read Nonverbal Cues," *Wall Street Journal: Digital Network* http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203863204574348493483201758.html?KEYWORDS=why+generation-y (accessed May 18, 2010).

[29] Jones, *Postmodern Youth Ministry*, 42.

including those about which religion makes claims."[30] However, because individualism is so unnatural, the emerging adult longs to find a connection to a group with whom to identify. Even still, Hirsch notes that this longing to identify with a group has undergone changes as well. He writes,

> People now identify themselves less by grand ideologies, national identities, or political allegiances, and by much less grand stories: Those of interest groups, new religious movements (New Age), sexual identity (gays, lesbians, transsexuals, etc.); sports activities, competing ideologies (neo-Marxist, neofascist, eco-rats, etc.), class, conspicuous consumption (metrosexuals, urban grunge, etc.), work types (computer geeks, hackers, designers, etc.), and so forth.[31]

In contrast to the cultural metanarrative that isolates, the biblical metanarrative calls for a unity and connectedness. This desire to connect with others is inherent in the *imago Dei* in Genesis 1 where the relational nature of the Trinity is first seen; it is more fully described in John 17. Both the LateNight and Transitions ministries are battling against the cultural metanarrative, as evidenced by the the vision of Grace to be a family of believers. McKnight calls attention to the fact that this generation will not respond well to "ramping up moral exhortations and warning about an endless hell."[32] For a generation that has been raised on a subjective individualism, a ministry offering moral platitudes and seeking a fear-based motivation will not be effective. Neither LateNight

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[30] Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 284.

[31] Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 61.

[32] Scot McKnight, "The Gospel for iGens: Reared on Self-Esteem and Impervious to Guilt, the Next Generation Needs Good News That Can Break through Their Defenses," *Leadershipjournal.net* http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/communitylife/evangelism/thegospelforigens.html (accessed June 7, 2010).

nor Transitions has succumbed to these methodologies, so both of these ministries score a 4 on this question.

To What Extent Does It Consider Issues of Ethnicity, Race, and Class

While Grace has a broad representation of class and ethnicity in the church, there is very little racial diversity. The class structure of the church covers both extremes with everyone in between those extremes. Even in the case of ethnicity, Grace enjoys a wide background of cultures, due largely to the NATO Air Force Base in town. However, for people of color who come into Grace, the lack of racial diversity is very apparent. The greatest amount of racial diversity seen in the church is from a contingent of college students from the Caribbean. Apart from that, Grace's body is a very homogeneous group.

The question must arise at this point, "Is Grace Church incompatible with racial diversity?" The answer does not seem to be an inherent problem with the church's theology or philosophy of ministry; thus, the lack of racial diversity may be tied to another corollary issue such as a preference for a particular worship style. No church can be the perfect church for everyone. Even still, Grace would more accurately reflect the universal body of Christ if more people of color were represented. Taking all of this into consideration, both the LateNight and Transitions ministries score a 3 with the view that Grace would benefit from intentionally engaging this discussion.

To What Extent Does It Consider Cultural Values

Levine tackles the dangers of the prevailing cultural values when she writes, "Some aspects of this culture [such as] materialism, individualism, perfectionism, and competition may actually contribute to psychological problems."[33] While it is inappropriate to segment one's spiritual life from a secular life, these issues are particularly harmful when they enter the church. Given the prevalence of these issues, an effective ministry must address these concerns head-on.

Grace does a good job of communicating that everyone is on a different path because there is more than one formula for discipleship. Doing this creates more of a freedom to admit struggles and shortcomings. This type of authenticity is frequently modeled by the leadership and reduces the comparative nature of a false spiritual maturity. After the church building was destroyed by a tornado in 1978, the church began what has become known as the "Elder-Deacon Dinner." This dinner is catered by the church, free of charge, and attendees are served and entertained by the leadership team of the church. One of the primary goals of this dinner is to eliminate the clergy/laity divisions and establish an equal footing as fellow believers. This level of authenticity draws people together, as the group is free to be a group of pilgrims journeying together.

This question identifies one of the real strengths of Grace; she has done a good job allowing people to move forward at their own pace. In addition, the church is not extravagant and actually values minimalism. These values carry over into the various

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[33] Levine, *The Price of Privilege,* 18.

ministries within the church, including the LateNight and Transitions ministries. Therefore, both of these ministries score a 4 on this question.

Effectiveness of Programmatic Structure

The creation of a programmatic structure provides a framework within which a ministry can operate. While "program" may conjure up negative emotions for some, the word's use in this project simply refers to the application of a ministry's purpose in a specific setting. This fifth component of the the Pentagon seeks to evaluate whether or not that program is the appropriate implementation of a ministry's purpose in light of theological accuracy and an understanding of psychosocial and cultural realities.

For example, given the busyness of life for this age group, any programmatic offering needs to "fit" into a daily or weekly schedule if the offering is going to be effective. Wuthnow records an emerging adult's thoughts on the subject when he writes, "Habitat fits better with our complicated lives. We can show up to help hammer nails for an hour when we have the time, and then disappear when other obligations occupy our busy schedules."[34] An effective program to emerging adults understands these types of issues which help the ministry plan accordingly.

Because of the nature of this component of the Pentagon, leadership must remain actively involved in the establishment and oversight of the program structure. DePree explains that "leaders can delegate efficiency, but they must deal personally with

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[34] Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 38.

effectiveness."[35] Due to the changing nature of culture, what is effective in programming structure one year may lose effectiveness the next year. This structure requires constant attention. Effective leaders, like the sons of Issachar, will have an understanding of their times and will respond accordingly in programming their ministry (1 Chr 12:32).

To What Extent Is the Current Structure an Accurate Methodology for Achieving the Stated Purpose

With a desire to raise up mature disciples in Christ and develop into a closer, more connected family of believers, Grace must determine whether or not she is facilitating those things through the program. Grace's strong point has typically been the "classroom," with teaching as the hallmark of the church. If that was the sole methodology for raising up disciples, Grace would score a 5. However, Grenz offers the following reminder,

> The practical goal of theology stands as a warning against the persistent danger of intellectualism. We pursue theology with the goal of understanding our faith in a systematic manner, of course. But constructing a theology system cannot be our ultimate purpose. Instead, we engage in theology reflection so that our lives might be changed. We desire to become stronger and more effective disciples--to connect Christian belief with Christian living.[36]

Currently, the leadership team of the church is beginning to move away from this type of model, and it is seeking new ways to connect the people of the church with each other and with the broader culture. The LateNight and Transitions ministries' current

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[35] Max DePree, *Leadership Is an Art* (New York: Currency, 2004), 19.

[36] Stanley J. Grenz, *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 18.

methodologies are having a high level of effectiveness; the struggle is considering if more programming would lead to more effectiveness. For example, LateNight sought to create small group studies; however, students did not respond to that offering, citing that they were involved in as many as three or four other studies and simply could not commit to another one. The Transitions study had a similar experience when it offered a large group study that incorporated a worship time and large group teaching time followed by a meal. After several different attempts, this offering ended because the participants could not "give another night to church."

In assessing the LateNight and Transitions ministry in this, they both score a 3.5, but for different reasons. The LateNight group is maturing disciples through large group times, but they already feel connected and Grace's attempt to create another opportunity for connection through small groups was unnecessary. The Transitions ministry has several small groups that are deeply connected, and they are maturing as disciples through that offering. Another large group teaching time was not a "felt need" for this group.

To What Extent Is the Structure Informed Theologically, Psychosocially, and Culturally/Environmentally

Grace is typically more grounded theologically than psychosocially or culturally/environmentally. However, Grace is taking major steps forward to become more effective in these other areas. For example, understanding the stress and busyness that most emerging adults feel, when offerings are presented to emerging adults by Grace, they are asked to prayerfully consider where they should invest themselves over the

course of that semester. Going a step further, they are actually discouraged from attempting to "do it all," because that would lead to an imbalance in their lives.

Another strength of LateNight and Transitions in regard to this question is that emerging adults have the freedom to struggle and ask questions. Wuthnow comments on the dangers some churches fall into when he writes, "The temptation for some religious leaders will be to provide ready-made answers for the tinkerers who come their way."[37] The structure of both of these ministries allows for the "tinkerers" to grow as they wrestle through tough life issues without the leadership patronizing them with surface-level answers. Furthermore, this process is happening in a safe community that builds bridges with other emerging adults and leadership. Therefore, both LateNight and Transitions rate strongly in this area, each scoring a 4. While they certainly are not perfect, they have no glaring weaknesses; this area will need consistent monitoring.

To What Extent Does the Program Assist in Moving People towards *Telos*

While much of the world may choose to ignore process, focusing only on the outcome, the church cannot function that way. *Telos* dictates that the entire process is important as it moves toward the desired end. This question seeks to understand if the ministry's structure validates the entire process, not just the final outcome. This is critical for the believer because the process is what God desires in the believer this side of eternity.

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[37] Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 232.

Both the LateNight and Transitions ministries would agree with the need to infuse *telos* throughout the spiritual journey. Paul expresses this same sentiment when he writes about being a living sacrifice and taking every thought captive (cf. Rom 12:1-2; 2 Cor 10:5). Likening the church family to a nuclear family, Garland discusses the importance of process when she writes, "family activity normally consists of interruptions, messes, disarray, starting and stopping, and partially completed tasks. In family life, the processes of life are just as important as reaching established goals."[38] Because this is the overall heartbeat of Grace, this focus on *telos* has permeated the ministries of the church, including LateNight and Transitions. In fact, the church carefully evaluates every ministry to insure that the offerings are consistent with this ideology. Because of this commitment, both ministries score a 4 in this area.

Plotting the Composite Scores on the Pentagon

Having examined both of the ministries that serve the emerging adult age group in Grace Church, the average scores for each of the five components of the Pentagon can be mapped. Both of these ministries score considerably higher than they would have three years ago. The LateNight Pentagon demonstrates that the ministry would benefit from improving in the area of purpose (see Figure 4). The Transitions ministry would benefit from a deeper understanding of the psychosocial realities facing this age group (see Figure 5).

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[38] Garland, *Family Ministry*, 47.

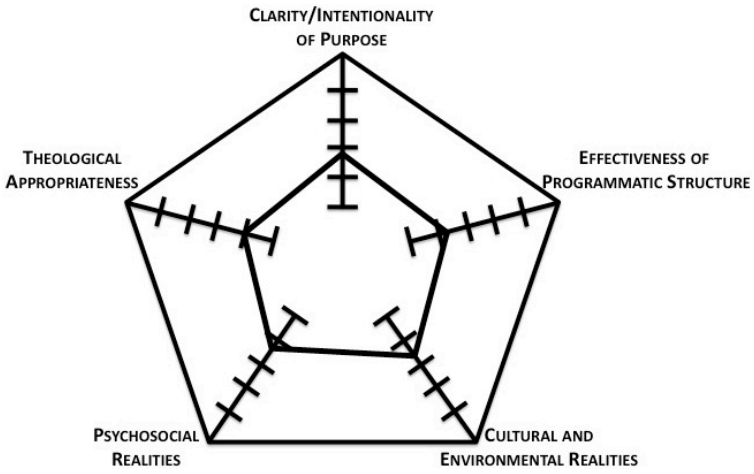

Figure 4. The LateNight Pentagon

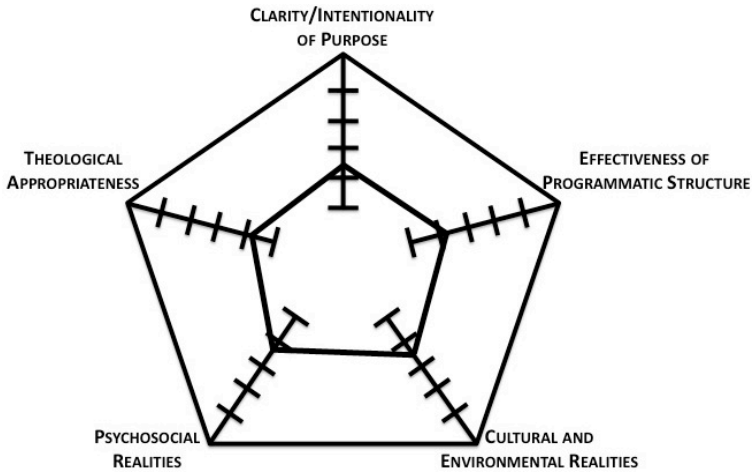

Figure 5. Transitions Pentagon

CHAPTER 7

RETHINKING EMERGING ADULTS AND GRACE CHURCH

Having examined the effectiveness of both LateNight and Transitions in the previous chapter, a plan must be developed that will help Grace Church become more effective in reaching this age group. Due to the declining religiosity of this group, it is apparent that current church growth strategies are failing. Hirsch makes this point when he writes, "Church growth theory had, by and large, failed to reverse the church's decline in America and was therefore something of a failed experiment. The fact remains that more than four decades of church growth principles and practice has not halted the decline of the church in Western contexts."[1] The reality of this decline forces the Church to question whether she should just "try harder" in implementing these principles. This project is going to attempt to argue that the problem is not effort, but philosophy. Given the systemic abandonment this generation has endured, it seems that the provision of social capital through the Church body would make the Church an ally in the task of

[1] Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 45.

transitioning to adulthood.[2] With that thought in mind, this chapter will examine an appropriate model for ministry and the role the Church can play in establishing a support system and equipping this group for life.

Starting with the Proper Model for Ministry

Due to the number of options for establishing a ministry model, a great deal of intentionality is required for a ministry to select the most appropriate one. The leadership need to be able to distinguish and separate the "core" issues from the the "cultural" issues. Also, the model needs to be able to shift and change as the culture changes. Cole compares this need for adaptability to an endoskeleton, explaining that an exoskeleton is hard, inflexible, established from beginning, and limits growth, whereas an endoskeleton is not immediately visible, more flexible, and grows with the life of the organism.[3] Cole believes that the "Body of Christ should have an endoskeleton."[4]

Terms such as "missional" and "attractional" have become commonplace in describing a Church's mission. Depending on the audience, either word can be seen as negative. The "missional" camp will herald the "incarnational" ministry. The "attractional" camp will argue the natural pull of the Body of Christ when the Church is functioning as the Church. Branson states that "congregational life is to be both

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[2] Smith offers the label of "religious capital" in place of social capital when it comes from within the Church. See Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 235.

[3] Neil Cole, *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 125.

[4] Ibid.

centrifugal and centripetal — both incarnational and attractional."[5] Each of these models will be examined.

The Centrifugal/Missional Model

Utilizing a physics term, this model takes it name from the idea that the Church is called to be "moving outward from the center," where the "center" is defined as a local church assembly (see Figure 6).[6] In these churches, the call is to leave the church building and engage the culture in an incarnational way. This group would herald St. Francis' axiom to "Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary use words" as they serve in social ministries and care for the whole community.[7] This type of ideology leads this camp to state that "the missional church both proclaims the gospel and embodies the gospel."[8]

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[5] Mark Lau Branson, "Ecclesiology and Leadership for the Missional Church," in *The Missional Church in Context: Helping Congregations Develop Contextual Ministry*, ed. Craig Van Gelder (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 114.

[6] "Centrifugal," Dictionary.com, http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/centrifugal (accessed June 22, 2010).

[7] Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 135.

[8] Lois Barrett, *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 151.

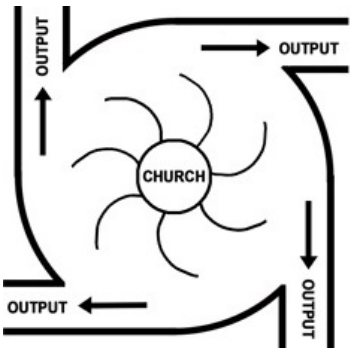

Figure 6. The Centrifugal/Missional Model

This model of ministry is firmly grounded in the Scriptures. This is the type of living that Jesus refers to in Matthew 5 when He states that believers are to "let their [light] shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven (Mt 5:16)." In fact, the New Testament is replete with references calling the believer to "good deeds." Luke records that believers are to love their enemies and to "do good to them (Lk 6:35)". Paul records that believers were actually created for "good works" and that they are to "do good to all people (Eph 2:10; Gal 6:10)." In Romans, Paul writes that good works can actually overcome evil (Rom 12:21). Recognizing that the process of doing good can be burdensome, Paul encourages believers to remain steadfast and to not "grow weary of doing good (2 Thes 3:13)." In fact, Paul encourages Titus to be "eager to do what is good (Ti 2:14)."

Utilizing that biblical foundation, missional church leaders who had become dissatisfied with the current state of the western church asked the question, "How do we transition from a consumer model of church to one that is essentially missional in

nature?"[9] According to these leaders, the Church has become like a self-perpetuating who has lost her true calling. Some authors find this trend so pervasive in western culture that there is a need for "a wholesale change in the way Christians are doing and being the church" to the point that they recommend dismantling "many of the arcane institutional structures it is now beholden to."[10]

Few things will fuel change as much as crisis. A declining religiosity and the failure of church growth strategies seem to be creating the perfect crisis for churches to rethink their philosophy of ministry. Roxburgh and Romanuk list as many as nine different categories of crises that lead to this type of change, including spiritual, cultural, midlife, moral, and situational.[11] One consistent motivator that these authors cite as a factor in shifting to a missional philosophy is the use of short-term mission trips. These short-term experiences create learning opportunities that lead to questions such as, "Why don't we feel the same passion for our city that we had when we ministered overseas?"[12]

Using those various crises as a time to reexamine the Church's calling, missional churches move out into the culture in an attempt to fulfill the biblical mandates to "do good" in their community. Two authors have described this mission as the church representing "God in the encounter between God and human culture."[13] This type of

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[9] Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), xiii.

[10] Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, ix.

[11] Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 218-221.

[12] Ibid., 220.

[13] Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 7.

thinking moves the church outward, where they become missionaries, as opposed to inward, where they become consumers. This radical shift will move the church into a sending organization rather than a gathering organization.

There are some inherent dangers in the way the missional church seeks to establish leadership. For example, "the missional church adopts an apostolic, rather than a hierarchical, mode of leadership. It abandons the triangular hierarchies of the traditional church and embraces a biblical, flat-leadership community that unleashes the gifts of evangelism, apostleship, and prophecy, as well as the currently popular pastoral and teaching gifts."[14] While this leadership style appears to be inspiring and empowering, it abandons the principle of an elder leadership team who serves as the under-shepherds of a local flock of believers (1 Pt 5:1-4). Furthermore, it eliminates the call for the stringent character qualities of leadership, as described by Paul, that protect the flock when the leaders serve as models (Ti 1:5-9). After examining those two passages, it seems difficult to reconcile how Frost and Hirsch arrive at a "biblical" community with a "flat-leadership" structure.

The Centripetal/Attractional Model

As in the case of the centrifugal/missional model, the centripetal/attractional also derives its name from physics, but in this model the movement is "directed toward the

[14] Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 11-12.

center (see Figure 7)."[15] Whereas the missional church elevates the sending mission of the church that began in Acts 1:8, the centripetal church elevates the "gathering together" spoken of in Hebrews 10. Unlike the missional church that Halter and Smay describe with words like "sending, missional, new works, movements, apostolic and networks," the attractional church is described as a "stable environment committed to shepherding, teaching, caring, nurturing, sustaining, and growing [the church] in our faith."[16]

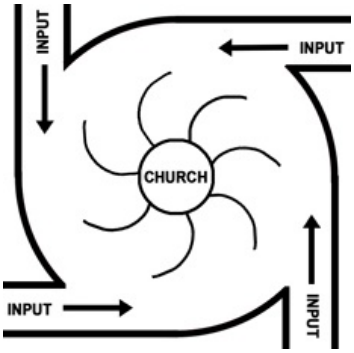

Figure 7. The Centripetal/Attractional Model

This model emphasizes that the very name of the Church, *ekklesia* (Gk. ἐκκλησιά), speaks of the gathering or assembly of believers. Unlike the missional leaders who are trying to dismantle the church structure, the author of Hebrews exhorts the believers to continue assembling together and, in fact, to intensify their efforts to do

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[15] "Centripetal," Dictionary.com, http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/centrifugal (accessed June 22, 2010).

[16] Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, *And: The Gathered and Scattered Church*, Exponential Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 127, 129.

so until the second advent of the Lord. This kind of exhortation must mean that something meaningful can, and does, happen when the Body of Christ is able to come together as a corporate body.

While the missional church seems to minimize any formal structure, the attractional model has a hierarchical structure utilizing leadership and pastoral gifts for the equipping of the saints (Eph 4:12). In this structure, the leaders prepare the congregation "for the work of ministry" so they are shepherded into a spiritual maturity that happens when every member of the body is functioning together (Eph 4:12-16). Dawn explains the benefit of this structure when she writes, "without Spirit-led community and theologically trained leadership, churches stand in danger of syncretism, the appropriation of ideas and practices from various spiritual traditions without adequate discrimination of their truth."[17]

As in the case of the missional model, the attractional model has some dangers associated with it. The most glaring danger is the very thing that caused the missional leaders to move away from an attractional model of church. They were particularly concerned about the tendency for attractional churches to become consumer-minded. When believers in a local church lose sight of the call "to make disciples," they remain seated in their comfortable churches and stop making a difference in the world. Jesus' call for believers is to be light in a dark world and salt in a bland world (Mt 5:13-16).

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[17] Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 137.

This kind of presence requires the believer to go and live out his or her faith in the midst of the darkness and blandness in such a way that God is glorified.

Another danger, which is closely akin to the previous danger, is that the believer's world gets too small when he or she loses a connection with the broader world. This "small" world will actually inhibit spiritual growth, as the believer will not have the worthwhile opportunity to see God work in the lives of the lost. Furthermore, this seclusion will only perpetuate the world's view that Christians are aloof, judgmental, and unloving. Certainly, Jesus warned His disciples that the world would hate them because the world hated Him (Jn 18:15-25). While this is an inevitable reality in this lost world, it is quite disconcerting when the church brings this kind of hatred upon herself due to her lack of grace in engaging this culture.

The "And" Model

I will endorse a third model in which the best of both models are integrated into a singular model that not only sends out, but also shepherds the local flock. In simplifying the Church's mission, Hirsch writes that the Church exists for no other purpose than to draw people to Christ and make them like Christ.[18] Taking it a step further, he declares that "if the Church is not doing this, then all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible, are a waste of time."[19] Having addressed that as the core issue of the Church's calling, several things bear discussion.

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[18] Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 102.

[19] Ibid.

In the book, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, the authors attack the attractional model in which they believe the Church merely "bids people to come and hear the gospel in the holy confines of the Church and its community."[20] In John 17, Jesus states that the unity of the Body of Christ will draw others to see God for who He is. The Church should invite people into their midst to hear the Gospel with the understanding that when believers are functioning as they are called, a unity that can only be manifested through the Holy Spirit will be on display. However, with that said, when that unity goes on display in the midst of darkness, it will become even more magnificent.

The weaknesses of each model demand the conclusion that either model, without the other, is incomplete. The missional model calls for the Church to live out her good works in the midst of the community. Many times, the community will not reciprocate, as the culture has pushed people into a consumer mindset. Therefore, the believer is prone to become weary in the process; hence, the exhortation is given to remain steadfast in this pursuit. At the same time, the attractional model calls for the Church to intentionally gather together and intensify their efforts to do so. An important question might be, "What is the purpose of this intentional gathering?" The verse that immediately precedes the calling to gather states the purpose — exhorting one another to stir up love and good works (Heb 10:24). That simple phrase seems to unlock the conflict between these two models and inextricably links them together. The Church is called to gather together in such a way that they encourage one another to go out "making

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[20] Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 41.

disciples"; when they inevitably grow weary, they gather to exhort and stir up again. The missional church that chooses to forsake the calling of the attractional church will be weary and ill-equipped for the call. The attractional church that chooses to forsake the sending out will atrophy due to stunted growth.

Regardless of where the ministry is taking place (inside the church or outside the church), believers are called to be incarnational in the way they relate with each other and the world. Halter and Smay explain that "Being incarnational is not so much about our direction; it's more about *how* we go, *what* we do as we go, and how we are postured in the culture God calls us to engage. Incarnation is the personality of our proclamation."[21] The missional church does not have the exclusive rights to "incarnational" ministry. In fact, the "one another" passages highlight the way the body is called to incarnationally live in community with each other.[22]

Both models have something to learn from each other. In *Children Matter*, the authors write that "God draws us into a faith community where parents and children will be nurtured, instructed, and supported, a community that works together in service to God and the world God loves."[23] Something great can happen when the Church gathers: an

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[21] Halter and Smay, *And*, 56.

[22] There are many passages that represent the sinful side of relating to *one another* (lusting for, judging, depriving, biting, devouring, destroying, provoking, envying, lying to, hating, slandering, and grumbling against) and many more that represent the incarnational side of relating to *one another* (devoted to, honoring, loving, edifying, accepting, instructing, greeting, waiting for, caring for, serving, carrying burdens for, bearing with, being kind to, submitting to, esteeming, encouraging, confessing sins to, praying for, offering hospitality to, and fellowshipping with…).

[23] Scottie May et al., *Children Matter: Celebrating Their Place in the Church, Family, and Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 131.

internal culture is created and replicated through the church. Garland writes, "A family's culture develops in the context of and in response to the layers of place, ethnicity, class and religion, but as the family weaves these together in its own history and ecology, the family takes on a culture of its own — unique strategies and values for living."[24]

Taking all of those components into consideration, there is simply no way to advocate one model without the other. McIntosh and Reeves correctly assert that, "both [centrifugal and centripetal movement] are means by which lost and broken people can be led into wholeness and salvation."[25] According to the Scriptures, training requires sending, and sending cannot be effective without the training, as these two were meant to go together.

The Establishment of a Support System

With an understanding of how to blend the centripetal and centrifugal models, the Church is poised to train her people to connect with emerging adults. Conventional wisdom has misinterpreted various behaviors resulting in the mistakenly drawn conclusion that adolescents and emerging adults do not want to connect with their parents or other adults. However, Smith has found that this could not be further than the truth.

> One of the most pervasive and powerful myths about children is that as they enter adolescence, their parents increasingly cease to matter in their lives. Adolescence is commonly—but mistakenly—assumed to be a phase during which parents

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[24] Diana S. Richmond Garland, *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 90.

[25] Gary McIntosh and R. Daniel Reeves, *Thriving Churches in the Twenty-First Century: 10 Life-Giving Systems for Vibrant Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006), 131.

> become irrelevant, replaced instead by influences of their peers, the media, and their children's own independent personalities and desires… Thus, in the name of individual autonomy—informed here by a cultural myth that is sociologically erroneous—the usually most crucial players in teenagers' lives disengage from them precisely when they most needed conversation partners to help sort through these weighty matters.[26]

Unfortunately, this mistaken assumption has left emerging adults abandoned and forced to trust each other, even though each of them is as confused as the next one. Levine captures that confusion when she writes that this generation describes themselves as "'being at loose ends' or 'missing something inside' or 'feeling unhappy for no reason.' While they are aware that they lead lives of privilege, they take little pleasure from their fortunate circumstances."[27] Sadly, in this emptiness, this group is making decisions that affect the rest of their lives with a damaged compass unable to give them clear direction. Within a support system, older, more mature believers can correct the notion that plagues many emerging adults who think and feel "that what is morally good and bad, right and wrong, true and untrue is self-evident to any reasonable interested person."[28] This is where the establishment of a support system will really pay dividends for the emerging adult.

While the Church has been on the periphery of the emerging adult's life, this generation probably has never seen her function as an "And" type of church. Mouw

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[26] Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 283-284.

[27] Madeline Levine, *The Price of Privilege: How Parental Pressure and Material Advantage Are Creating a Generation of Disconnected and Unhappy Kids*, 1st Harper pbk. ed. (New York: Harper, 2008), 5.

[28] Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 82.

writes that "we can fully understand the claims of a theological perspective only if we attempt to see what it would look like if those claims were fleshed out in the life of a community."[29] So many of the churches that have been experienced by this generation are not "fleshing out" anything that is attractive. Therefore, in an effort to minister effectively to this generation, the Church will have to move centrifugally with a heart to adopt this generation into the life of the Church. Then, they can see the true heart of the Church as she fleshes out her theology of the importance of the "one" (Lk 15).

This problem is being compounded by the home-life of many in this generation.[30] Strommen and Hardel explain, "If a grace-oriented relationship with God is not modeled and taught in the home, the tendency of children and youth is to interpret Christianity as a religion of expectations, demands, or requirements; as a result, many grow into adulthood assuming that their efforts to live a good life qualify them as Christians."[31] Beyond the Church's failure to model her theology, the fact that the home has failed to model grace is furthering the chasm between the emerging adult and the Church. While the Church cannot go back and undo the pain associated with the systemic abandonment of these emerging adults, she can help alter their course by intervening. For example, Levine writes that,

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[29] Richard J. Mouw, *He Shines in All That's Fair: Culture and Common Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 74.

[30] While there are a great number of authors writing on this topic, authors consulted for this project such as Clark, Hearst, and Elkind capture the heart of this current culture's home-life.

[31] Merton P. Strommen and Richard A. Hardel, *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry* (Winona, MN: St. Mary's Press/Christian Brothers Publications, 2000), 127.

> Perhaps the single most important ritual a family can observe is having dinner together. Families who eat together five or more times a week have kids who are significantly less likely to use tobacco, alcohol, or marijuana, have higher grade-point averages, less depressive symptoms, and fewer suicide attempts than families who eat together two or fewer times a week. Eating together reinforces the idea that family members are interested, available, and concerned about each other. It provides a reliable time and place for kids to share their accomplishments, challenges, and worries, to check in with parents and siblings, or simply to feel part of a family.[32]

The Church needs to communicate the value of of being part of a family. An intentional commitment to connect with each other would mean a great deal to this generation that has continually been left alone. Levine also encourages a slower pace of life, noting that "It is almost always in the quiet, unpressured moments that kids reach inside and expose the most delicate parts of their developing selves."[33] If this is true, the Church must evaluate programming to consider if there are enough of the "quiet, unpressured moments" to foster the kind of belonging that results in emotional health and connection.

With this kind of support, the emerging adult is given additional resources to assist him or her in the task of individuation. In order for this support to become a reality, the leadership will have to lead the Church to adopt the "And" mentality. DePree seeks to remind leaders that "a belief that every person brings an offering to a group requires us to include as many people as possible."[34] If the leadership of a local church would take

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[32] Levine, *The Price of Privilege*, 33.

[33] Ibid., 31.

[34] Max DePree, *Leadership is an Art* (New York: Currency, 2004), 65.

this call seriously, and present this vision to the congregation, they could change the direction of an entire generation. It would require more than a program, and it would take the sharpening of a vision that longs to bring everyone into the Body, recognizing that everyone has something to offer the overall Body of believers. DePree goes a step further when he describes the offerings of every person. He explains that this process provides the "gift of meaning: not superfluous, but worthy; not superficial, but integral; not disposable, but permanent."[35] As a result of the systemic abandonment of this generation of emerging adults, there may be no generation for whom those words could be more meaningful.

Equipping for Life

Both the concept of the "And" model and the establishment of a support system are the *telos* towards assisting emerging adults' attempt to become adults. Smith has said that "the central challenge of emerging adult life, the end that nearly all of their peers are pursuing - [is] learning to stand on one's own two feet."[36] However, as discussed previously, that process of walking the tightrope to adulthood is a treacherous journey. With that said, Smith declares that the goal of emerging adulthood is to manage risks with the "challenge . . . to have a lot of fun without it coming back to hurt them."[37] The Church's call is not to stifle that fun, but to mend emerging adults and make them ready

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[35] DePree, *Leadership is an Art*, 68.

[36] Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 65.

[37] Ibid., 63.

to be used by God as part of the unified body of believers (Eph 4). In a world that is redefining tolerance, the emerging adult must make decisions about truth and how he or she will choose to pursue life.[38] While culture is telling emerging adults to treat theology as a cafeteria line in which they can pick and choose what to believe, they are discovering the inevitable end: syncretistic theology does not work.

Against the backdrop of a syncretized theology and an individualized faith, the Church has the ability to equip emerging adults for life. However, any assault against those two issues will most likely be understood as a personal attack, driving away the emerging adult. Levine notes that "when approval is conditional on performance, the closeness and affection are bound to suffer."[39] The Church must be cognizant of and battle against the emerging adult's perception of the Church's rigidity and conditional acceptance. Otherwise, the Church will not have any meaningful role in speaking into the emerging adult's world and his or her struggle to individuate. Part of the Church's challenge with this age group will be to communicate that the Church has not lost her relevance in the current culture. As previously discussed, this age group is motivated by social justice and the desire to serve others, illustrated by the hours devoted to community service. McKnight goes so far as to say that "Anyone who vividly sketches a

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[38] DeYoung and Kluck demonstrate this shift in the definition of tolerance when they write "most people would say that respectfully disagreeing is an intolerant act. Now tolerance means just agreeing with someone. But by definition, tolerance implies some disagreement." See Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent: By Two Guys Who Should Be* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 101.

[39] Levine, *The Price of Privilege*, 180.

community marked by justice, love, peace, and holiness has a message iGens want to hear."[40]

Beyond serving the greater community and world, the Church is also relevant in addressing the life of the emerging adult. Too often, the problem relating to this age group is not the message, but the messenger. This group knows they are struggling to adapt to an ever-changing culture, so they welcome the help of caring, gracious individuals. When the Church functions as called, reaching out, accepting, and equipping emerging adults to be used by God in the corporate body of believers, the results are really quite amazing. Smith explains,

> Whether we focus on relationships with parents, giving and volunteering, participation in organized activities, substance abuse, risky behaviors, moral compassion, physical health, bodily self-image, mental and emotional well-being, locus of control, life satisfaction, life purpose, feeling gratitude, educational achievement, resistance to consumerism, pornography use, or potentially problematic sexual activity, the more religious emerging adults are consistently doing better on these measures than the least religious emerging adults.[41]

Therefore, the Church must examine how she can best prepare the emerging adult for the inevitable struggles of life. A great place for the Church to start with this group is Romans chapters 6, 7, and 8. In these three chapters, the believer is taught that he or she has been set free from sin and has the agency to choose a better way—God's way. Most commentators agree that Paul, while using "I" in these chapters, is using his own

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[40] Scot McKnight, "The Gospel for iGens: Reared on Self-Esteem and Impervious to Guilt, the Next Generation Needs Good News That Can Break through Their Defenses," *Leadershipjournal.net* http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/communitylife/evangelism/thegospelforigens.html (accessed June 7, 2010).

[41] Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 297.

experience as a representative for all Christian men and women.[42] The believer has the calling to "walk in the newness of life (Rom 6:4)" that will result in dedicating one's life to the glory of God, exchanging "death for life everlasting."[43] This type of clean slate gives the emerging adult a fresh start with the permission and power to choose a better path.

Paul continues on this path in chapter 7, as he addresses the believer who attempts to live the spiritual life apart from the Holy Spirit.[44] Paul communicates his continual struggle to live the spiritual life, finding that he continues to do that which he hates and neglects doing the very thing he wants to do (Rom 7:15-16). Yet, in the middle of the struggle, Paul recognizes that he finds "delight in the law of God according to the inward man (Rom 7:22)." The struggle that Paul faces is common to every believer, this current generation included. However, there probably has not been a generation so conditioned to performance-based acceptance as this one. The opportunity to see Paul struggle in his Christian life will be affirming to emerging adults, as they will readily identify with the process. Better still, the fact that Paul's inner man struggles with sin is a sure sign of his conversion, for no unregenerate person has ever declared a delight in God's law.[45] This is

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[42] C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 Volumes, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh, UK: T & T Clark, 1975), 1:341.

[43] William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 226.

[44] Douglas Moo, *Romans 1-8*, ed. Kenneth Barker, The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 471.

[45] Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:341.

another encouragement for today's emerging adult who has grown weary of the struggle of the Christian life.

While Romans 7 is filled with terms of defeat, Romans 8 brings resolution and the freedom from the condemnation that attends defeat. The difference between Romans 7 and 8 is most clearly seen in the absence of the Holy Spirit in 7, and the Spirit's overwhelming presence in 8. In this, the believer is encouraged by his or her status as God's child, an heir of God and joint heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17). This encouragement is ultimately seen when Paul writes, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Rom 8:18)." In those words, Paul validates the struggle and encourages the believer to press on with the knowledge that something greater awaits. Paul also stresses that God is able to work together all things "for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28)." In that, each emerging adult can understand that no situations in life are ever wasted. All decisions, good or bad, are in God's hands, who through His sovereignty is able to make them good.

The freedom that is created and explained in those three chapters of Romans allows the emerging adult to go and live life fully. In fact, Hodges believes that these experiences are the very things that teach the believer "the value of heaven, and prepares him for the enjoyment of it."[46] With all that they face, emerging adults have the agency to honor Christ and make a difference through the volitional years. Each individual who

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[46] Charles Hodge, *Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), 247.

has trusted Christ has been adopted into God's family and is free from condemnation. The emerging adult is able to walk the tightrope with the safety net of a God who is able to craft everything into the ultimate good for His children. However, while those things are all true, only the church who faithfully teaches the Scriptures can point the emerging adult in this direction. In doing so, the Church can equip the emerging adult to move forward in pursuing Christ and transition to adulthood in a way that honors Christ and develops the spiritual maturity that will serve him or her well through the rest of life.

Beyond that, DePree reminds Church leaders of two important truths relating to this topic. First, the "art of leadership lies in polishing and liberating and enabling" the gifts they see in others.[47] The Church must adopt these emerging adults into the life of the Church in order to function that way in their lives. Second, "leaders are responsible for future leadership. They need to identify, develop, and nurture future leaders."[48] The importance of this point cannot be overstated. The next generation of the Church is dependent of the cultivation of future leaders from a group that has been showing a declining religiosity over the last decade.

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[47] DePree, *Leadership is an Art*, 10.

[48] Ibid., 14.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Emerging adults have suffered a systemic abandonment from every group that should have functioned as a support system. Consequently, this group has had to learn to navigate life's victories and failures without the assistance of what Anderson calls "a ministry of paraclesis."[1] He explains, "The Greek word translated as 'advocate' is *paraclete*. It literally means, 'Called to the side' and denotes a role of comforting, exhorting and encouraging. The ministry of serving as a *paraclete* is one that continues the ministry of Christ through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit."[2]

The process of transitioning through adolescence without a paraclete has been costly for this group. A generation of emerging adults is coming of age stressed and lacking the personal resources to cope with life. At a point where the Church would be able to step in and fill the *paraclete* role, this age group is drifting away from the Church, as the Church has been marginalized with them.

While emerging adults are not asking for help, due in part to the fact they have never received much assistance, their lifestyle choices demonstrate their need. As this group struggles to adjust to the transitions of life, they have turned to suicide, self-injuring, risk behaviors, and pornography. In an attempt to postpone the inevitable arrival of adult responsibility, this group is even staying in school longer.

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[1] Ray S. Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 195.

[2] Ibid.

The process of individuation is a difficult and perilous journey that every adolescent must travel. Causing further stress, the journey has become a twelve to fifteen year process, often walked in isolation, towards a goal that emerging adults are not even sure they want to achieve. They have a generalized ambivalence about reaching adulthood because they view it as a time of personal stagnation with responsibilities that are both burdensome and annoying.[3] With this outlook, adulthood means the end of fun, the end of spontaneity, and the end of personal growth. Even so, reaching adulthood is still considered a monumental achievement. It is no wonder that this forward view causes them to look back with "nostalgia on a childhood and adolescence that seem easier in some ways than their lives now."[4]

In the midst of this struggle, emerging adults are looking for assistance to make it across the tightrope. Some will turn to faith, but their view of God is so poorly constructed that it only provides a false hope. In Soul Searching, Smith explains that teenagers have become enticed by a "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism."[5] Smith explains that this "faith" has a god who watches over human life and longs for people to be good, has the goal for life to be happy, and remains "on call" for times of trouble.[6] Instead of serving the god who Smith describes, this group needs now, more than ever, to have the

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[3] Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 218-219.

[4] Ibid., 228.

[5] Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 162.

[6] Ibid., 162-163.

the real God and His church to rally around and support them through the process of individuation. The loss of social capital over the last fifty years has been dramatic. Bronfenbrenner warned that "no society can long sustain itself unless its members have learned the sensitivities, motivations, and skills involved in assisting and caring for other human beings."[7] Putnam refers to these lessons Bronfenbrenner spoke of as a "'win-win' situation where everyone benefits from social connections."[8] This pattern of "winning" will become infectious and continue on to future generations.

Cote has recognized that "communities with higher levels of social capital have more people who subscribe to a 'norm of reciprocity' that helps create a 'dense civic fabric' in which people connect with their neighbors and community institutions."[9] This is where the church can make a difference. The Church has the privilege to stand beneath the tightrope that every emerging adult must traverse and provide encouragement and comfort as she champions each adolescent (1 Thes 2:11-12). Smith points out that "American religion is one of the few, major American social institutions that is not rigidly age-stratified and emphasizes personal interactions over time."[10] The church allows adolescents to have access to other adults, creates cross-generational ties, and can provide

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[7] Urie Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 53.

[8] Robert D. Putnam, "Tuning in, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America," *PS: Political Science and Politics* (December 1995): 665.

[9] James E. Cote, *Arrested Adulthood: The Changing Nature of Maturity and Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 69.

[10] Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 246.

additional support outside the home.[11] With the infrastructure already in place for the church to intervene, it is time for the church to put their practical theology to work by connecting God's story to the stories of these emerging adults.[12]

Heeding the call of Richardson, it is time for the church "to respond redemptively to divorce, remarriage, unwed mothers, blended families, ethic groups, and college students."[13] Emerging adults are a resilient group whose lives are replete with progression and regression as they "make variable progress towards financial and residential independence and marriage and parenthood."[14] While most emerging adults survive the crossing of the tightrope, Clark offers the idea of also creating a "safety net" (see Figure 8).[15] This net would be supported from two positions: "convergence" and "congruence." The convergence involves increasing the social capital for each individual. The congruence is based on a singular message of support and assistance to help the emerging adult across the tightrope.

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[11] Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 246.

[12] Chap Clark, "The Changing Face of Adolescence: A Theological View of Human Development," in *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically About Youth Ministry*, ed. Kenda Creasy Dean, Chap Clark, and Dave Rahn (Grand Rapids, MI: Youth Specialties/Zondervan Publishing House, 2001), 60.

[13] Brian C. Richardson, Stanley S. Olsen, and Allyn K. Sloat, "Young, Middle, and Senior Adults," in *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*, ed. Robert E. Clark, Lin Johnson, and Allyn K. Sloat (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 283.

[14] Jennifer L. Tanner, "Recentering During Emerging Adulthood: A Critical Turning Point in Life Span Human Development," in *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*, ed. Jeffrey J. Arnett and Jennifer L. Tanner (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006), 32.

[15] Chap Clark, "Youth, Family, and Culture Cohort 2009 (Y2)," unpublished class notes for YF723/724, Fuller Theological Seminary, March 2009.

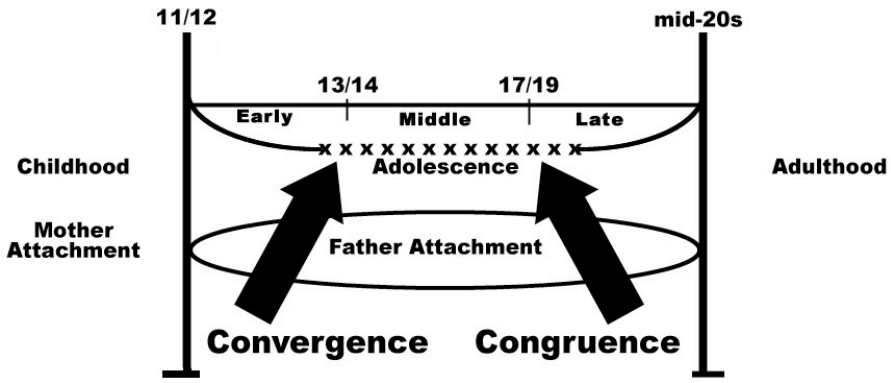

Figure 8. The Tightrope of Adolescence with Social Capital

There may be no generation that is more in need of God's metanarrative than this current generation of emerging adults. Marva Dawn writes, "What a great gift the metanarrative is! It offers our children and the people of the world around us a story into which they can place themselves and find forgiveness for their past, purpose for their present, hope for their future."[16] They are looking to be a part of a great story and the church has the story to share with them. In the Church's story, Jesus Christ is the main character, but each believer has a supporting role to play that answers his or her questions of identity, autonomy, and belonging.

DePree makes the statement that "giants see opportunity where others see trouble."[17] It is time for the church to see the opportunity before her to reach this group of emerging adults and help them make the transition into the church and into adulthood. These emerging adults have lived in imbalance, which has hindered their ability to take the next step in individuation. Levine explains this imbalance when she writes that, "while demands for outstanding academic or extracurricular performance are very high,

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[16] Marva J. Dawn, *Is It a Lost Cause?: Having the Heart of God for the Church's Children* (Grand Rapids, MI: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 44.

[17] Max DePree, *Leadership Is an Art* (New York: Currency, 2004), 73.

expectations about family responsibilities are amazingly low. This kind of imbalance in expectations results in kids who regularly expect others to 'take up the slack,' rather than learning themselves how to prioritize tasks or manage time."[18] No one else can "take up the slack" of making the transition to adulthood, but the church can walk alongside and assist them in the process.

The good news for Grace Church is that the transition from an centripetal/ attractional model to an "And" church has already begun. This year marks the church's tenth year in offering a short-term adult mission trip out of the country. While the trip has always contained both older adults and emerging adults, the 2009 trip was balanced with twenty-four of the fifty-five participants being under the age of twenty-five. Prior to this trip, the emerging adults, who were a minority, always had to mingle with the older adults, but this trip was different. After two days of watching the two groups remain separate during travel, at the worksite, at VBS, and at meals, something changed. The older adults complained that the younger group was keeping to themselves, until one adult asked, "Why don't you go and sit with them? …you are all doing the same thing you are accusing them of!" As a result, a change occurred. The two groups interacted the rest of the week, each group with its own name - the "Wisers" for the older adults and the "Enthusiastics" for the emerging adults. At the end of the week, the "Enthusiastics" thanked the "Wisers" (often by name) for taking the time to get to know them and caring about their stories. Walls came down that week, and that story has been repeated often over this past year.

Using the momentum from that trip, Grace has started three new ministries that are all intergenerational. The first, "Grace in Action Workdays," sends teams of

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[18] Madeline Levine, *The Price of Privilege: How Parental Pressure and Material Advantage Are Creating a Generation of Disconnected and Unhappy Kids*, 1st Harper pbk. ed. (New York: Harper, 2008), 6.

people to minister in the community through various work projects. This last workday spanned the ages from seven up to almost eighty years of age. The second ministry was actually a complete overhaul of the VBS program. This year, rather than offering a day program that divided up families, the church shifted to an evening program where entire families could participate together. The third new ministry, "SummerNights@Grace," is scheduled for three consecutive Wednesday nights. The church building is setup with tables of ten and the entire church body is invited to come and fellowship together. The night begins with dinner and fun songs for the children, and includes a brief devotional followed by "table talk," where everyone discusses questions regarding the devotional. Afterwards, the tables work together on crafts that are utilized in large group games. The first night was a huge success, with over three hundred people in attendance. One comment from the night was, "After being at Grace for thirty-two years, last Wednesday we moved from a classroom church to a family church."

These are the kind of things upon which Grace can continue to build in her attempts to become more effective in adopting emerging adults into the church. As relationships build, a stronger sense of belonging will be experienced. Once that happens and the safety net of convergence and congruence has been fortified, Grace will be able to address the core issue of individuation plaguing emerging adults. Written almost twenty years ago, Colson's words still ring true, "The church is not incidental to the great cosmic struggle for the hearts and souls of modern men and women. It is the instrument God has chosen for that battle--a battle we are called to by virtue of being members of His body. To bring hope and truth to a needy world, *The church must be the church*."[19]

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[19] Charles W. Colson and Ellen Santilli Vaughn, *The Body: Being Light in Darkness* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1992), 32.

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